CARAMEL MILK TEA

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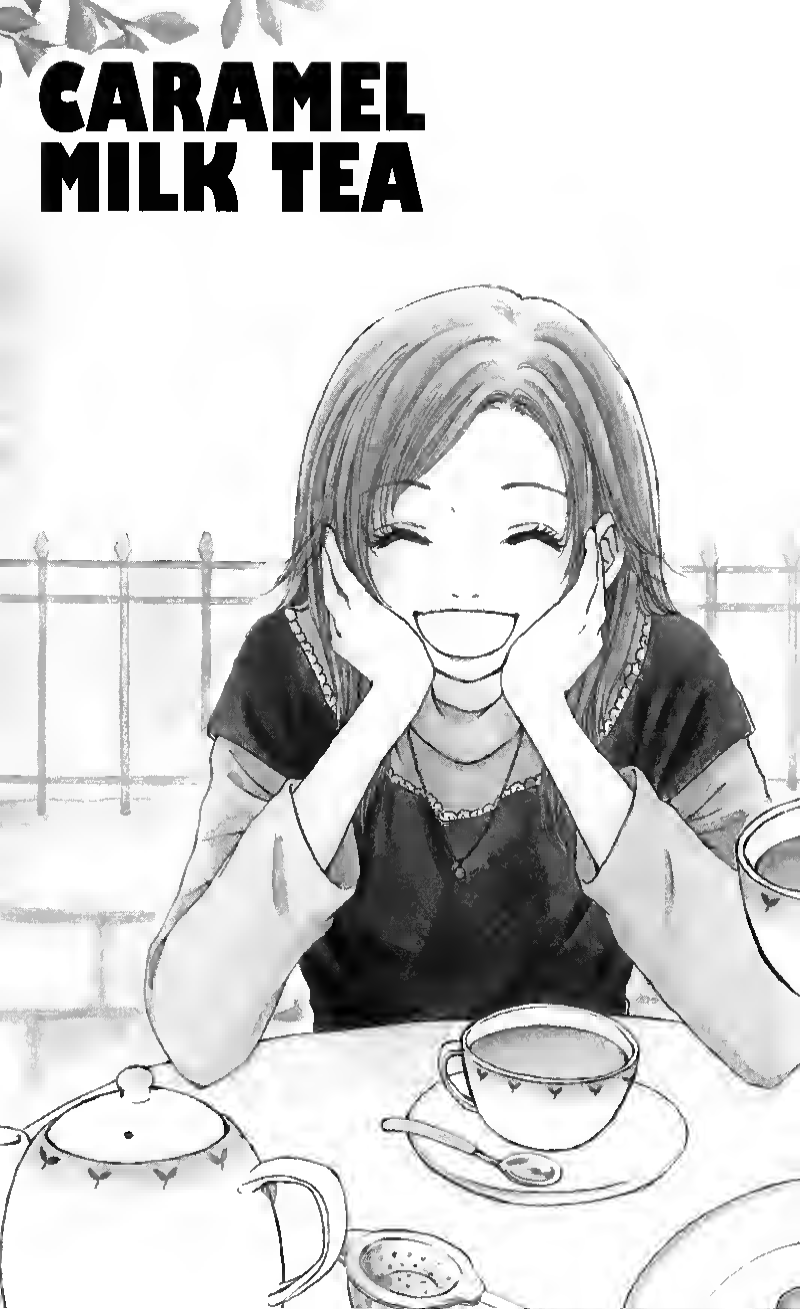
○Betsucomiフラワーコミックス

Falling in love at first sight is probably an impossibility for me.
I'm not the kind of person who has a specific type . . .
Café menu
WELCOME.
ARE YOU READY TO ORDER?

CARAMEL MILK TEA

CARAMEL MILK TEA



HELLO, EVERYONE!

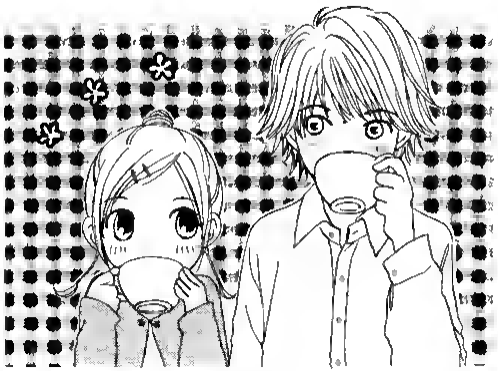
Hello, everyone!

I'm Usami.

TThanks to everone's love and support, this is my second one-shot volume.

Thank you!
Thank you!

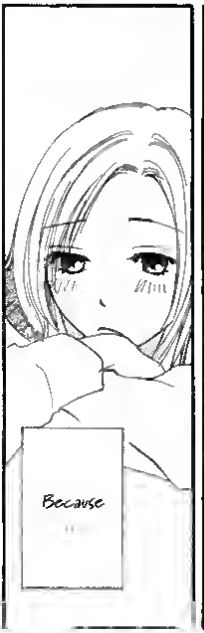
First time readers of this manga, and readers that have read my previous manga, if you all like this manga, I'll be infinitely delighted.

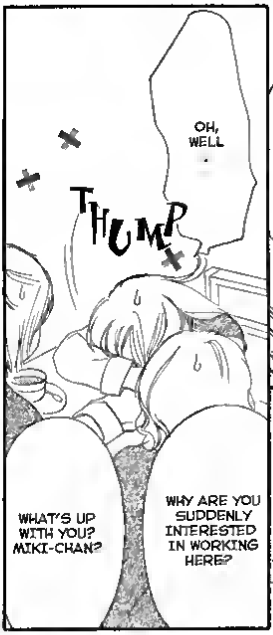


I didn't think that love at first sight could ever really happen to me
THIS IS FOR TABLE 9
MIKI-CHAN? WHAT'S WRONG?
HMM, HE'S OK.
HEY, GUYS, DON'T YOU THINK THAT WAITER IS REALLY HOT?
HE'S THE TYPE THAT GIVES ME THAT I'LL-BE-AND-KNOW-IT KIND OF FEELING
BUT THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE LIKE THAT!
NO...
ARE THERE REALLY A LOT?
NO, I DON'T THINK HE'S ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE...

UM...
ARE YOU LOOKING FOR PART-TIME HELP?
HUH?

SORRY TO MAKE YOU WAIT.
WHO DOES THIS LATTE BELONG TO?
OH, MIKI-CHAN, IT'S YOURS.

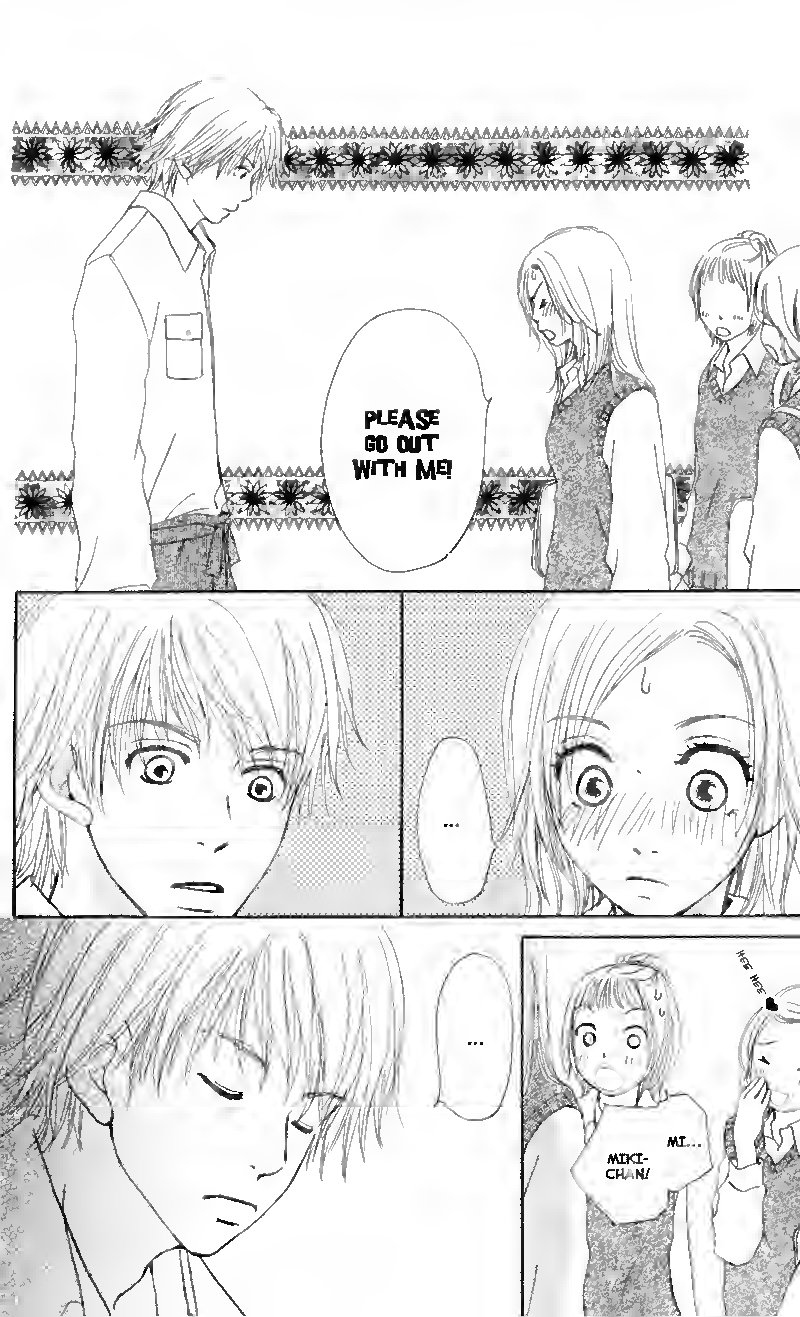

Because
...

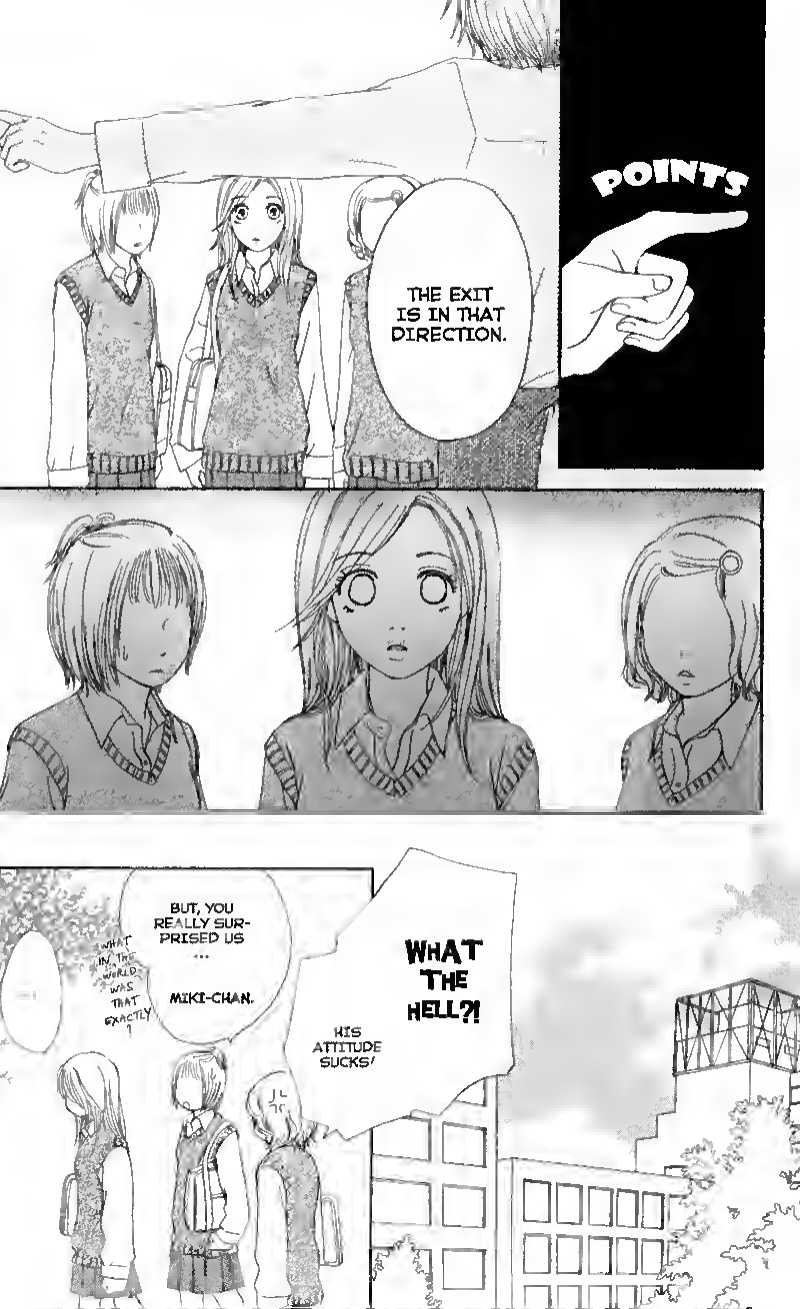

OH, WELL.
THUMP
WHAT'S UP WITH YOU? MIKI-CHAN?
WHY ARE YOU SUDDENLY INTERESTED IN WORKING HERE?

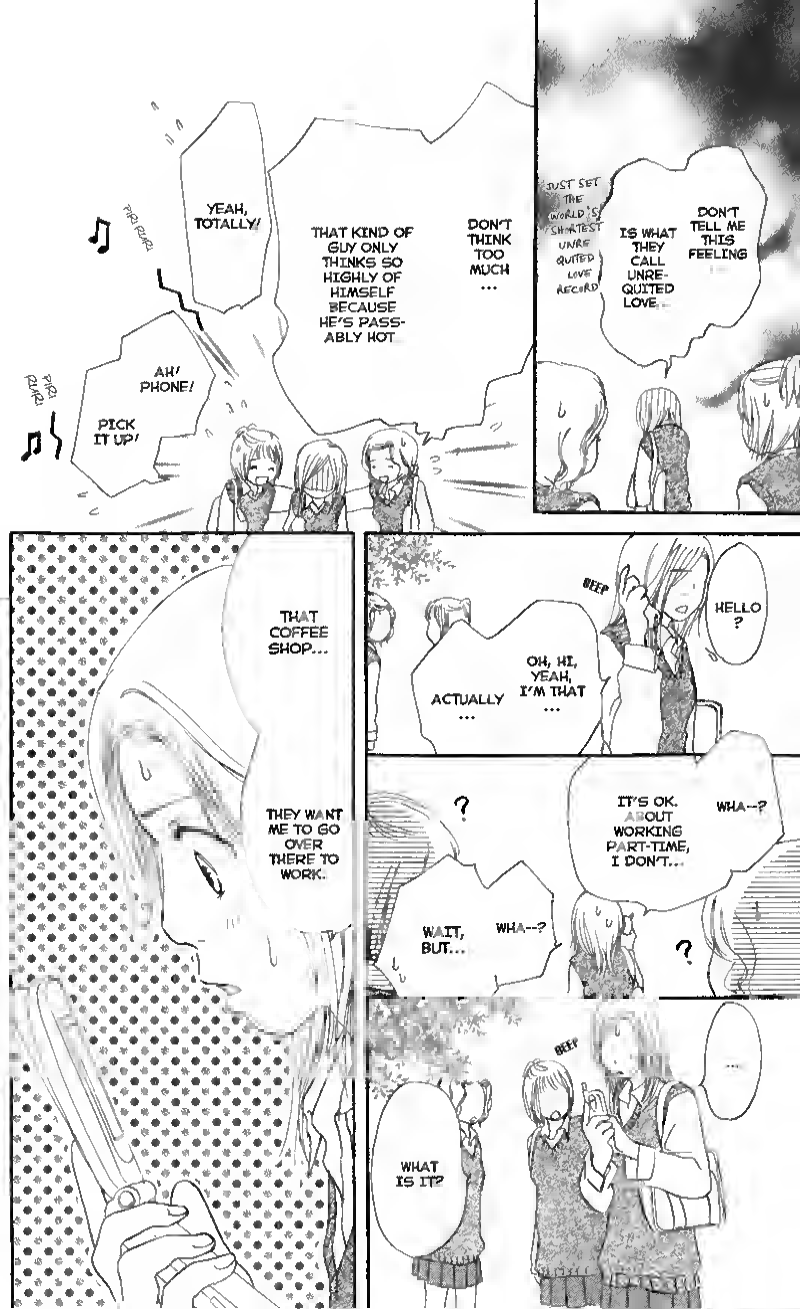
SORRY, WE'RE FULLY STAFFED AT THE MOMENT.
OH... I SEE ...

YEAH, UM
BUT WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEAVE YOUR CONTACT INFO ANYWAY?
BECAUSE THE MANAGER ISN'T HERE AT THE MOMENT

You should ask him his name
SHOULD I TRY ASKING HIM FOR HIS NAME?
THE TOTAL WILL BE 2000 YEN.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO PAY TOGETHER?
SURE.
We'll just work it out ourselves later
Because I know this kind of thing won't happen twice
ALL IT TOOK WAS ONE GLANCE...
YOUR CHANGE IS 230 YEN.
I'M ALREADY IN LOVE WITH HIM.
PLEASE ...


PLEASE GO OUT WITH ME!
...
...
NICE NICE
MI...
MIKI-CHAN!


THE EXIT IS IN THAT DIRECTION.
POINTS
WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THAT EXACTLY?
BUT, YOU REALLY SURPRISED US ...
MIKI-CHAN.
HIS ATTITUDE SUCKS!
WHAT THE HELL?!


YEAH, TOTALLY!
THAT KIND OF GUY ONLY THINKS SO HIGHLY OF HIMSELF BECAUSE HE'S PASSABLY HOT
DON'T THINK TOO MUCH...
TIRI RURI
AH! PHONE!
PICK IT UP!
TIRI RURI
JUST SET THE WORLD'S SHARTEST UNREQUITED LOVE RECORD
IS WHAT THEY CALL UNREQUITED LOVE...
DON'T TELL ME THIS FEELING...
THAT COFFEE SHOP...
THEY WANT ME TO GO OVER THERE TO WORK.
BEEP
HELLO?
OH, HI, YEAH, I'M THAT...
ACTUALLY...
?
WHA--?
IT'S OK. ABOUT WORKING PART-TIME, I DON'T...
WHA--?
WAIT, BUT...
?
BEEP
...
WHAT IS IT?

Why . . .
did things
turn out like this?
← MANAGER
← COULDN'T REFUSE AT ALL.
THIS IS OUR NEW CO-WORKER, OKADA MIKI.
SHE'S A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT?
SINCE SOME PART-TIME STUDENTS JUST LOVE TO KEEP TAKING OFF DAYS,
WE'LL JUST HAVE YOU COME HELP US
SNICK
SNICK
SNICK
AH! MIKI-CHAN,
HE'S A PART-TIME STUDENT LIKE YOU. HIS NAME IS SASAKI RYUUJI, A COLLEGE STUDENT.
YOU CAN ASK HIM IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU DON'T KNOW.
SASAKI... SO HIS LAST NAME IS SASAKI...

OK! LET'S GET TO WORK!
UMM ... HELLO ...
PLEASE TAKE CARE OF ME ..
WHY DID YOU HAVE TO COME HERE?
HM...?
CAN YOU NOT BE LIKE THIS?
IT'S REALLY ANNOYING.
WHAT?!
WHAT'S UP WITH THIS GUY?!
WHAT...?

"THAT KIND OF GUY THINKS SO HIGHLY OF HIMSELF JUST BECAUSE HE'S PASSABLY HOT."
JUST WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?!
I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY...
I CAME HERE TO WORK...
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU!
AND...
ABOUT ME ASKING YOU OUT... LET'S JUST FORGET THAT EVER HAPPENED.
I MUST HAVE BEEN OUT OF MY MIND WHEN I DID THAT.
TURN

DAMN!
YOU USED TO MEAN EVERYTHING TO ME, BUT I'VE CHANGED MY MIND!
YOU MEAN NOTHING TO ME!
AND I'LL PROVE IT TO YOU!
MISS?
COMING.
SORRY
HUMPH
EXCUSE ME, SASAKI,
SOMEONE'S ASKING FOR YOU...
THIS WAY SHE WILL LEARN TO DO HER JOB WELL.
MIKI-CHAN IS SO HARD-WORKING!

WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?
GIGGLE
GIGGLE
GIGGLE
THEY ALWAYS COME HERE LOOKING FOR SASAKI.
SASAKI!
SIGH
ACTUALLY, THIS HAPPENS A LOT.
GIRLS JUST FLOCK TO HIM.
WHEN DO YOU GET OFF?
LET'S HANG OUT AFTER WORK, OK?
AS LONG AS THEY DON'T INTERFERE WITH HIS WORK, WE DON'T MIND IT!
SORRY, I'M GOING TO BE HERE UNTIL WE CLOSE
BUT I THINK IT REALLY BOTHERS SASAKI.
...

I DIDN'T CONSIDER HIS FEELINGS,
AND JUST CONFESSED TO HIM.
AND TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, IT NOW LOOKS LIKE I'M STALKING HIM AT WORK.
TO HIM,
AM I JUST AS ANNOYING AS THESE GIRLS?
I CAN'T BLAME HIM FOR HATING ME
SASAKI,
GIMME YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS!
I DON'T HAVE AN E-MAIL ADDRESS
I'M SO EMBARRASSED
STOP PUSHING ME, YOU IDIOT
NO WAY!
HA HA HA HA
sigh
WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?
EEEK... THEY ARE SO LOUD

MISS?
WHY DON'T YOU ALLOW ME TO DIRECT YOU TO THE NEAREST HOST CLUB?
HAH?
AH?

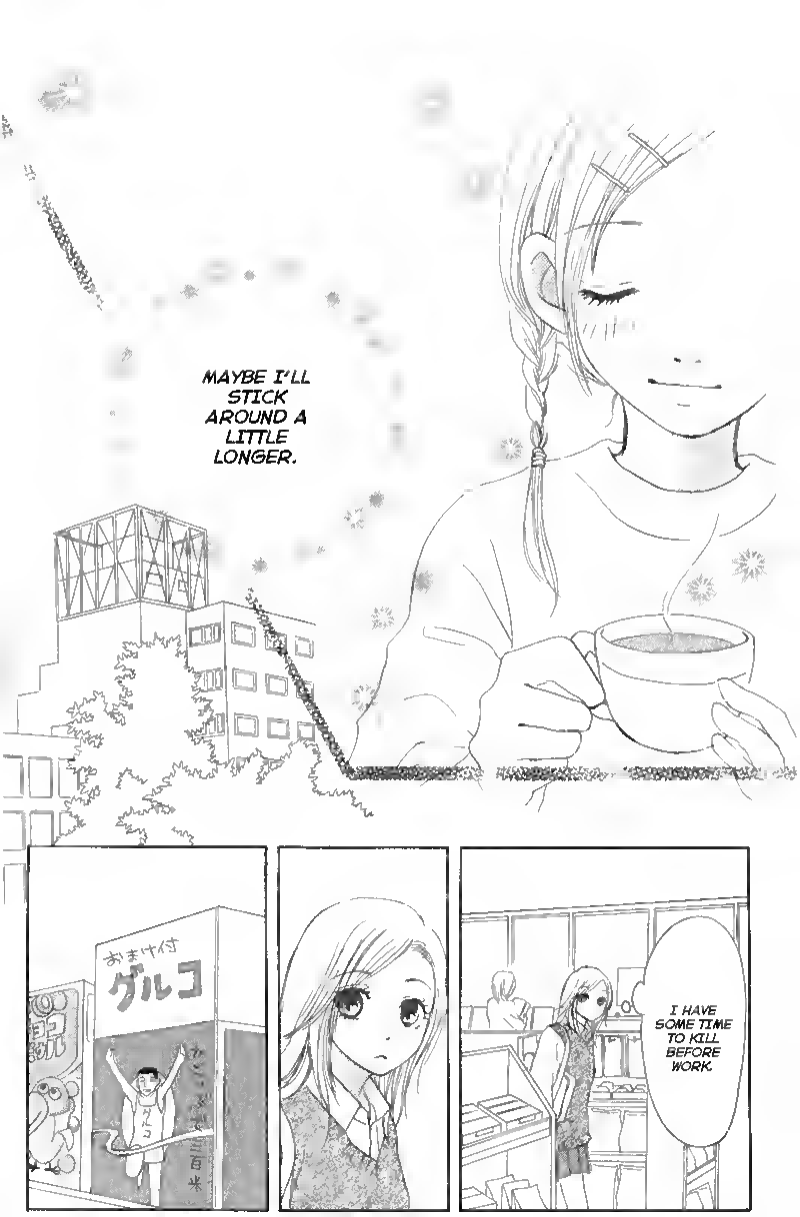
THANKS FOR COMING.
click
CLO
閉店し
WHERE'S THAT TWERP
OKADA?
SINCE THE CUSTOMER SEEMED TO BE QUITE UNSATISFIED WITH HER,
THE MANAGER IS TALKING TO HER RIGHT NOW.
..
EVEN THOUGH WE CAN'T SAY THAT IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT,
IT'S NOT RIGHT TO ARGUE WITH THE CUSTOMERS
SORRY ...
WELL, NOW YOU KNOW WHAT YOU DID WRONG.
CLEAR THE TABLES AND GO HOME.

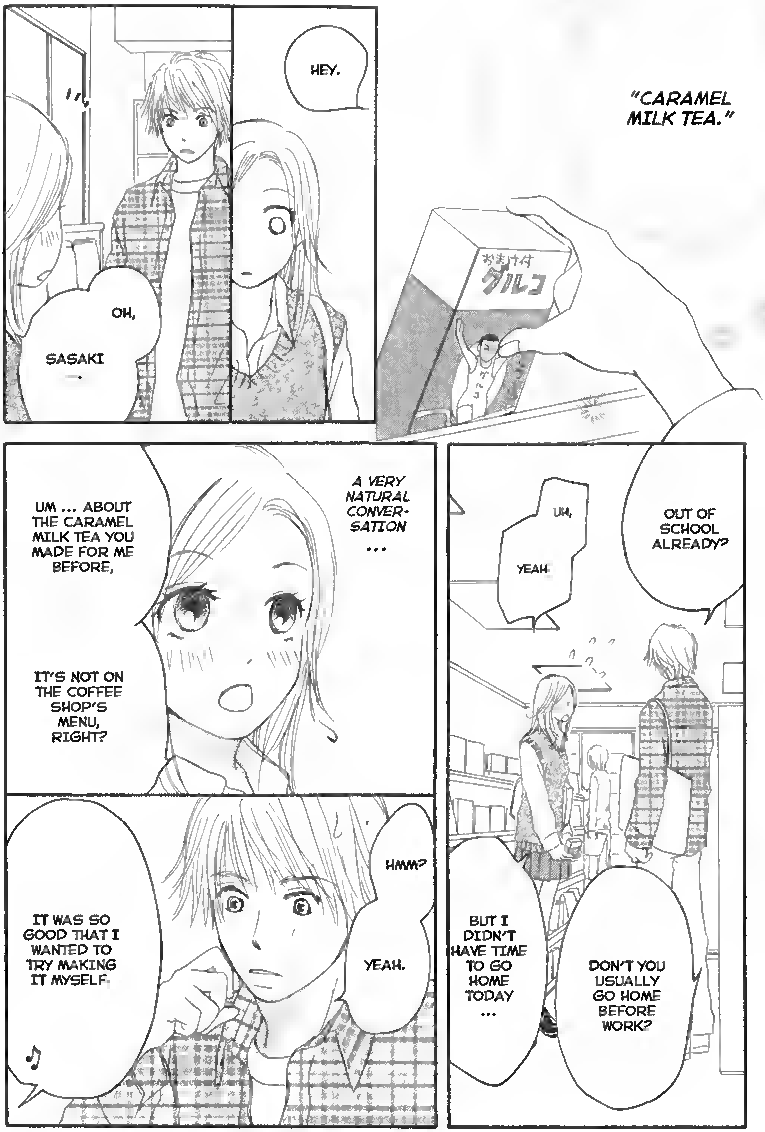
THERE'S NO POINT IN STAYING, ANYWAY.
CLINK
CLINK
I SHOULD JUST QUIT...
SNIFF
WHAT IS THAT SMELL...
THAT BITTER-SWEET SCENT?
GLITTER

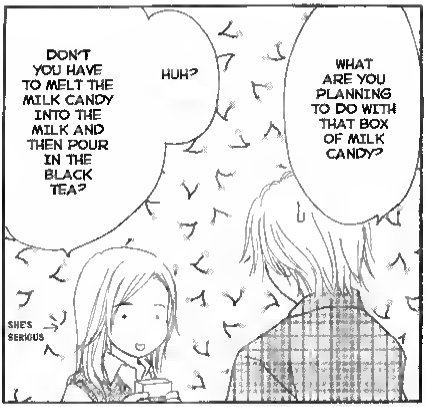
WHAT IS IT?
WHAT —?
...
WANNA TRY IT?
CARAMEL MILK TEA.
GLITTER

IT'S SWEET...
IT TASTES SWEET BECAUSE YOU'RE FEELING BETTER NOW
IT DOESN'T HAVE ANY SUGAR IN IT.
BUT TASTY.
WHOA...
THANKS FOR EARLIER.
HUH?
THE HOST CLUB THING

CHUCKLE
SO WARM...
SO SWEET ...

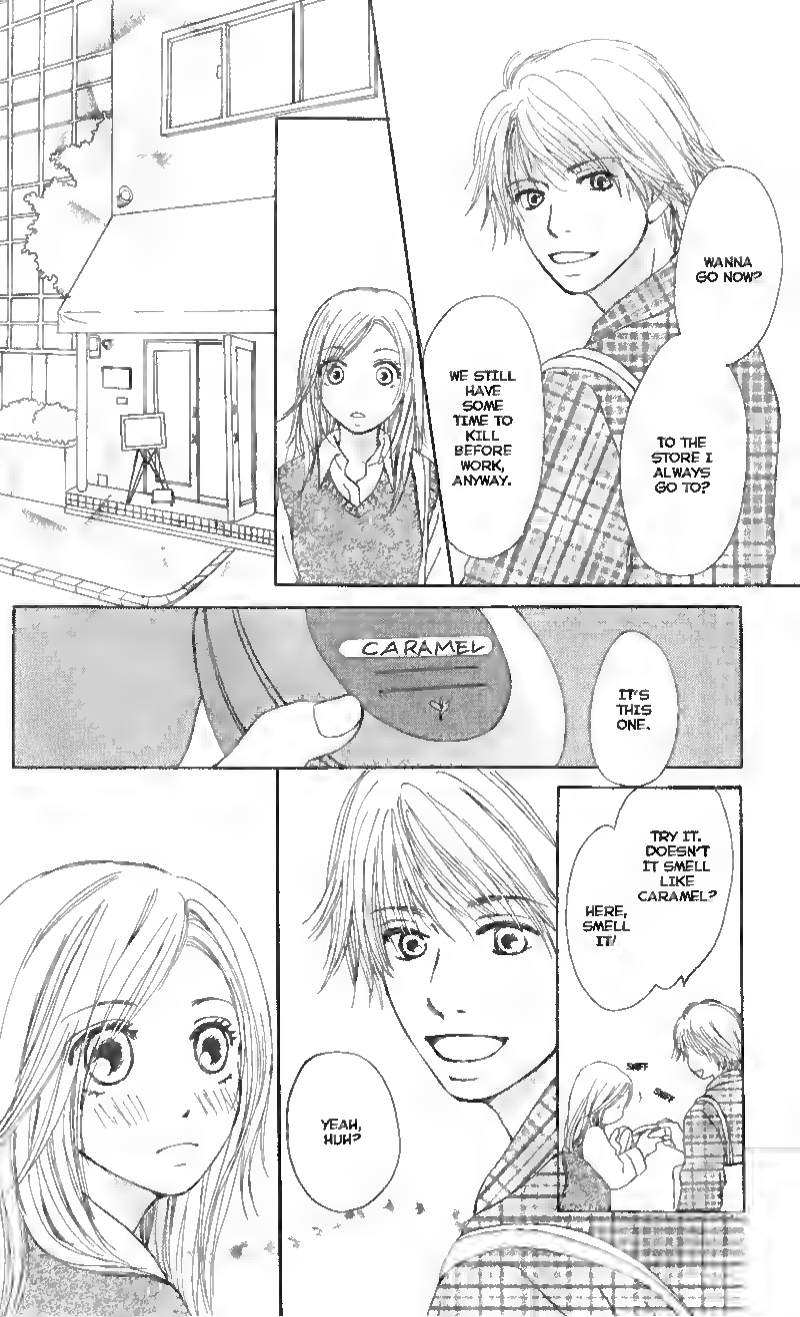

MAYBE I'LL STICK AROUND A LITTLE LONGER.
おまけ付
グルコ
I HAVE SOME TIME TO KILL BEFORE WORK.


HEY.
OH, SASAKI
"CARAMEL MILK TEA."
おまけ付 グルコ
A VERY NATURAL CONVER-SATION ...
UM ... ABOUT THE CARAMEL MILK TEA YOU MADE FOR ME BEFORE,
IT'S NOT ON THE COFFEE SHOP'S MENU, RIGHT?
HMM?
YEAH.
IT WAS SO GOOD THAT I WANTED TO TRY MAKING IT MYSELF.
UH, YEAH.
OUT OF SCHOOL ALREADY?
DON'T YOU USUALLY GO HOME BEFORE WORK?
BUT I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO GO HOME TODAY ...

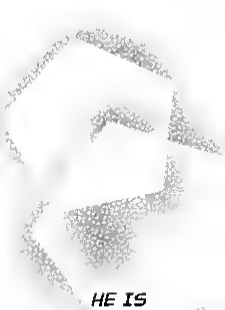

DON'T YOU HAVE TO MELT THE MILK CANDY INTO THE MILK AND THEN POUR IN THE BLACK TEA?
HUH?
WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO WITH THAT BOX OF MILK CANDY?
SHE'S SERIOUS

おまけ付
グルコ

YOU NEVER KNOW. IT MIGHT TASTE GOOD.
BUT THAT WASN'T A BAD IDEA!
I'M GONNA MELT
HA HA HA HA HA
THEN CAN YOU TELL ME WHERE I CAN BUY CARAMEL MILK TEA?
IT'S NOT THAT FUNNY, YOU KNOW
WHO WOULD HAVE GUESSED THAT IT WAS CARAMEL THAT YOU ADD TO THE TEA?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW...?
HA HA HA HA HA HA


WANNA GO NOW?
TO THE STORE I ALWAYS GO TO?
WE STILL HAVE SOME TIME TO KILL BEFORE WORK, ANYWAY.
CARAMEL
IT'S THIS ONE.
TRY IT. DOESN'T IT SMELL LIKE CARAMEL?
HERE, SMELL IT!
SNIFF
SNIFF
YEAH, HUH?

I really can't believe...
THAT I'M...
ACTUALLY OUT SHOPPING WITH SASAKI.
DO YOU WANT TO BUY IT?
YEAH.
AW, THERE'S A VANILLA ONE.
SASAKI IS ACTUALLY SMILING WHEN HE TALKS TO ME NOW...
OH, YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT!
AH!
NO, NO!
WHAT THE HELL AM I THINKING?
I'VE ALREADY BEEN REJECTED ONCE
BESIDES...
AND THEY HAVE FRUIT FLAVORS, TOO



HE IS FINALLY WILLING TO TALK TO ME...

IF I WERE TO BOTHER HIM AGAIN... HE'D HATE ME.

I DON'T WANT THAT.

HERE I AM, TALKING BIG, WHEN I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHETHER OR NOT I CAN ACCOMPLISH MY DREAM.
ISN'T THAT REALLY PATHETIC?
NOT AT ALL!
I THINK THAT THINKING ABOUT THOSE THINGS AND HAVING THE MOTIVATION TO ACCOPLISH A GOAL IS REALLY IMPORTANT.
DON'T YOU THINK SO?
SHAKE
HMM...
SPLASH
YOU'RE RIGHT.
YUP.
SASAKI, CAN YOU COME HERE A SEC?
OH...
YEAH, SURE, COMING

AUGH
I'VE ALREADY BEEN REJECTED!
I CAN'T THINK ABOUT IT ANYMORE!
HE'S EVEN BETTER THAN I THOUGHT.
IS REALLY AWESOME.
SASAKI ...
BUT ...
EVERY TIME I SEE HIM ...
I HAVE TO KEEP REMINDING MYSELF OF THIS.
SOME-THING WRONG?

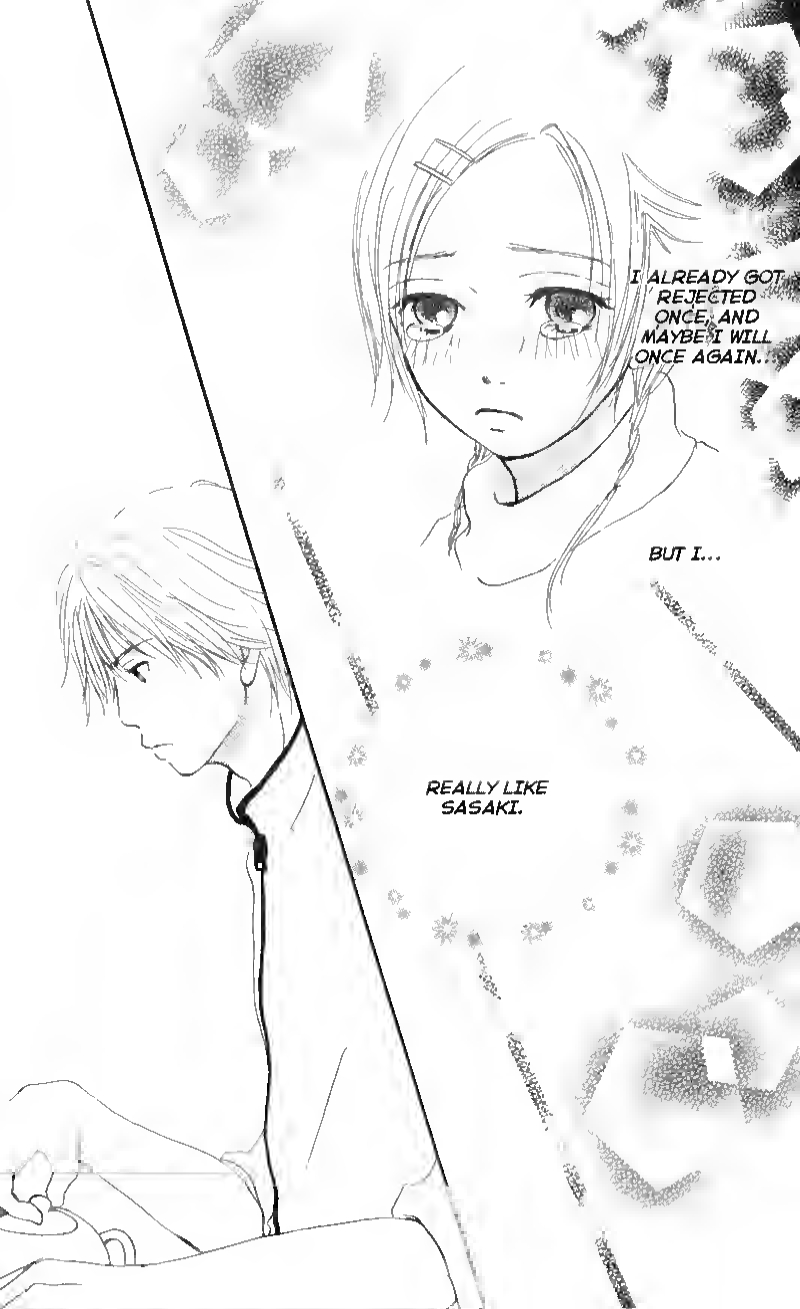
HMM... I REALLY DON'T GET IT. WHY IT'S NOT THE SAME,
WHY THE CARAMEL MILK TEA THAT I MAKE DOESN'T FEEL THE SAME AS THE ONE YOU MAKE.
YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW KNOW YOUR WAY AROUND A KITCHEN, DO YOU?
IT TASTES BAD DOESN'T IT?
WHA...? How RUDE!
NUH-UH, IT TASTES REALLY GOOD.
BUT IT JUST DOESN'T GIVE OFF THE SAME FEELING.
DID YOU BOIL IT FOR TOO LONG?
EH? BOIL WHAT?
THAT'S WHY... YOU HAVE TO MAKE IT LIKE ROYAL MILK TEA.
THAT'S YOUR 6 PROBLEM
HUH? YOU GUYS ARE STILL HERE?
CLICK
IF YOU GUYS DON'T LEAVE NOW, SHE WILL APPEAR
WHO WILL APPEAR?
GOOD WORK
He He He He He
THERE'S A REALLY SCARY LEGEND THAT TAKES PLACE NEAR HERE.
ACCORDING TO THE LEGEND, A BLACK SHADOW WILL APPEAR AND FLOAT BACK AND FORTH.
AND YOU'LL HEAR THE FAINT CRIES OF A WOMAN!
IS IT ... A GHOST?!
He He He He He
WAHH!
IDIOT!

I'M GOING FIRST.
OKADA
WAIT UP!
YOU GUYS SHOULD JUST GO HOME, ANYWAY
...
THE PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY GET SCARED ARE MORONS.
THERE'S NO SUCH THING, JEEZ.
JUST WAIT FOR A SEC.
LET ME JUST GO CHANGE.
I'LL TAKE YOU TO THE TRAIN STATION.
IT'S REALLY DANGER-OUS FOR A GIRL TO WALK BY HERSELF AT NIGHT.
WHA--?
BUT DIDN'T YOU SAY ...
THAT GHOSTS DON'T EXIST?

MORON!
IT'S NOT THE GHOSTS YOU SHOULD BE WORRIED ABOUT, BUT THOSE CRAZY STALKERS THAT FOLLOW YOU.
CLICK
OH! SORRY FOR THE WAIT!
LET'S GO!
WHY DOES HE KEEP CALLING ME IDIOT AND MORON LATELY —?

...
SASAKI, ARE YOU TAKING THE TRAIN, TOO?
NAH.
I LIVE ON N ROAD. IT'S CLOSE ENOUGH TO WALK.
BUT THAT'S IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION/ YOU'RE GOING TO BE WALKING AROUND IN CIRCLES.
IT'S REALLY CLOSE.
I CAN WALK THERE.
AND, BESIDES, IT'S REALLY CLOSE TO THE TRAIN STATION.
EVEN IF YOU WALK SLOWLY,
IT WILL STILL ONLY TAKE A COUPLE OF MINUTES TO GET THERE.
HMM ?
... MM.
THANK YOU ...

A LITTLE SLOWER...
WALK A LITTLE SLOWER...
PLEASE...
I HOPE WE NEVER GET TO THE TRAIN STATION...


I ALREADY GOT REJECTED ONCE, AND MAYBE I WILL ONCE AGAIN...
BUT I...
REALLY LIKE SASAKI.

OKADA ..
AH/ WHAT IS IT?
HAH?!
IT'S OVER-FLOW-ING.
AUGH ...
OKADA.
YEAH?
ARE YOU STAYING FOR THE NIGHT SHIFT TODAY, TOO?
YES.
THEN WAIT FOR ME BY THE ENTRANCE AFTER WORK
I'LL WALK YOU.

...I LIKE HIM.
OK ...
GOOD WORK, EVERY ONE!
I REALLY WANT TO TELL HIM...
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
CAN THAT BE...
STAND
"A BLACK SHADOW WILL APPEAR AND FLOAT BACK AND FORTH "
"AND YOU'LL HEAR THE FAINT CRIES OF A WOMAN!"
THE GHOST THE MANAGER WAS TAKING ABOUT?!
SWAY SWAY
BUT CAN I REALLY SAY IT?

CLICK
O-O-OVER THERE ...
HMM?
S-SA ... SASAKI ...
AH ...
OKADA ?
WHAT IS IT?
AUGH!
THOSE GIRLS YOU DIRECTED TO THE HOST CLUB THE OTHER DAY.
I TOLD THEM NOT TO COME HERE ANY MORE. WHY ARE THEY...?
HUH?
THEY ARE ...
NO WAY! IS THAT FOR REAL?!
DESPICABLE!
WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT THAT GIRL?

WE KNOW WE'RE NOT WELCOMED HERE
BUT DON'T YOU REALLY LIKE SASAKI?
ALL RIGHT, ALREADY YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY ANY MORE
STALKERS?
HORRIBLE REALIZATION
STALK-ERS?
ARE YOU GUYS ...
SO CALLED!
SASAKI!
LET'S GO, OKADA!
HEY, YOU SHOULD AT LEAST LISTEN TO WHAT SHE WANTS TO SAY TO YOU!

I'VE ALREADY REJECTED YOU GUYS BEFORE!
NO MATTER WHAT YOU GUYS SAY, THE OUTCOME WON'T CHANGE!

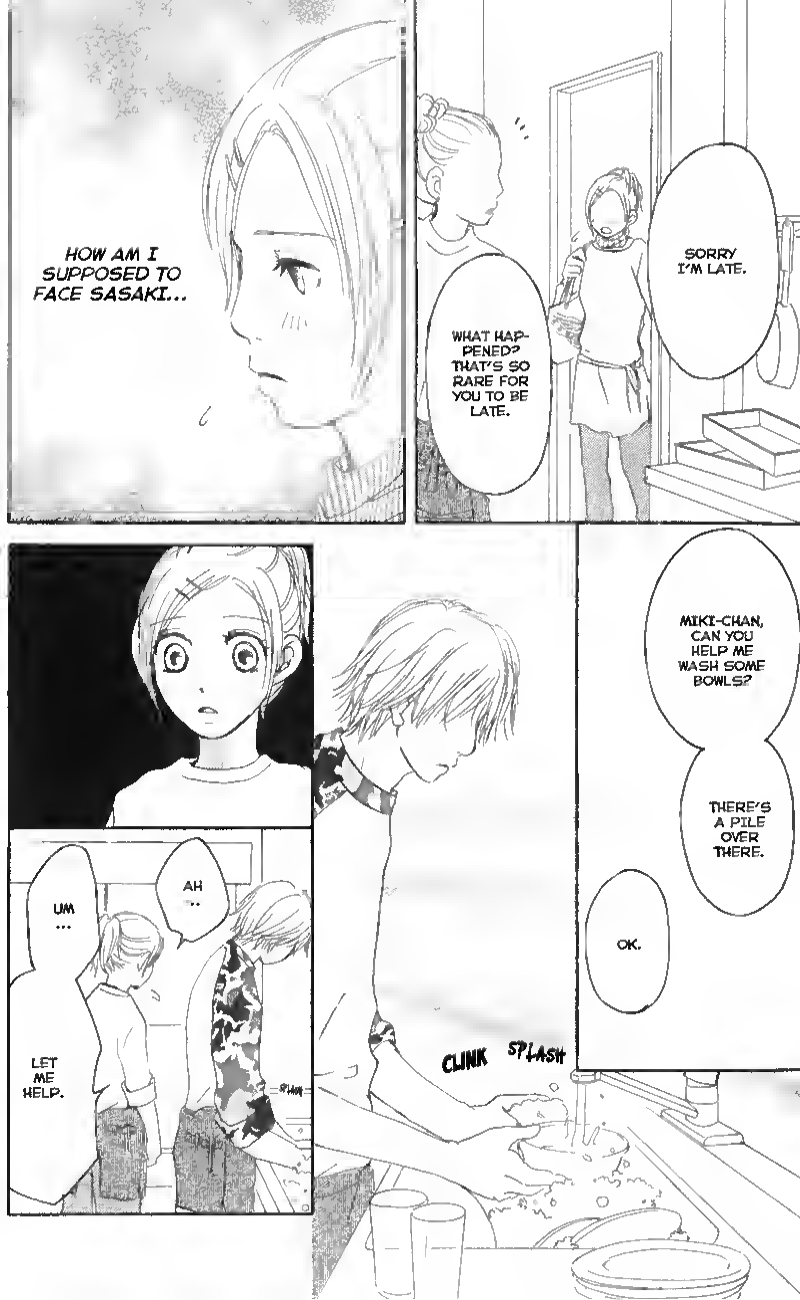
"NO MATTER WHAT YOU GUYS SAY, THE OUTCOME WON'T CHANGE!"
COME ON, OKADA.
I DON'T DARE SAY IT...
I'M REALLY SCARED.
OKADA?
WHAT'S WRONG?

I SAID, YOU DON'T HAVE TO TAKE ME ANY FURTHER!
IT'S OK. WE'RE ALMOST THERE, ANYWAY.
HUH?
OK...
I CAN GET THERE BY MYSELF.
THIS IS FAR ENOUGH
WHY ARE YOU MAD ALL OF A SUDDEN?
WHAT'S WRONG? WHY ARE YOU BEING LIKE THIS?
IS IT BECAUSE WHAT HAPPENED WITH THOSE GIRLS?
TELL ME
IN CONTRAST, IT JUST MAKES ME EVEN MORE AFRAID.
SEEING THAT EXPRESSION...

MAYBE THAT KIND OF DEVOTION DISGUSTS YOU
BUT YOU'VE NEVER ONCE CONSIDERED *THEIR* FEELINGS BEFORE!
EVEN IF THEY'VE ALREADY BEEN REJECTED,
...
HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF THAT?
MAYBE THEY STILL DON'T WANT TO GIVE UP!
EVEN IF YOU SAY IT LIKE THAT
TROUBLE IS STILL TROUBLE
I DON'T FEEL THE NEED TO CONSIDER THEIR FEELINGS ALL RIGHT?

SASAKI, YOU REALLY ARE TOO CRUEL!
ISN'T THAT ...
REALLY CRUEL?
THAT'S FINE WITH ME.
DIDN'T YOU SAY I DIDN'T HAVE TO TAKE YOU ANY FURTHER?
WHATEVER. I DON'T CARE.
IS THAT SO?

LATER.
BE CAREFUL ON YOUR WAY HOME.

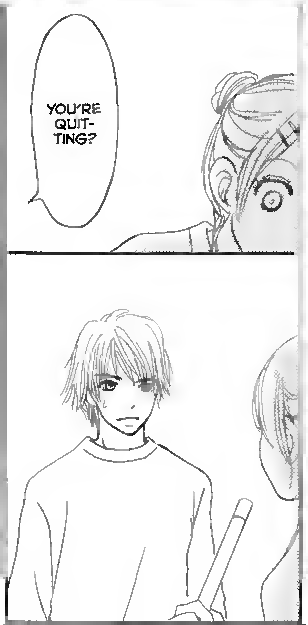

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO FACE SASAKI...
SORRY I'M LATE.
WHAT HAPPENED? THAT'S SO RARE FOR YOU TO BE LATE.
MIKI-CHAN, CAN YOU HELP ME WASH SOME BOWLS?
THERE'S A PILE OVER THERE.
OK.
CLINK
SPLASH
AH ...
UM ...
LET ME HELP.
SPLASH

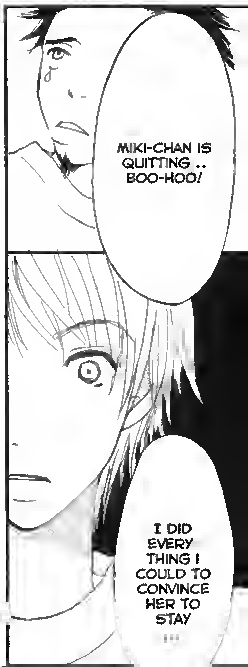
GRAB
SPLASH
GOOD JOB, EVERY-ONE!

UH ...
G-GOOD WORK.
HE HATES ME, AFTER ALL...
HE'S AVOIDING ME...

SINCE IT'S ALREADY LIKE THIS...
IT WOULD BE BEST IF I NEVER SHOW MY FACE AROUND HIM AGAIN.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
AH!
SASAKI, YOU CAN LEAVE NOW.
I NEED TO HIRE SOME PART-TIME STUDENTS!
UH,
I CAN SEE THAT.
NOW HIRING PART TIME STUDENTS
For more information, please see manager!
scratch scratch


YOU'RE QUIT-TING?

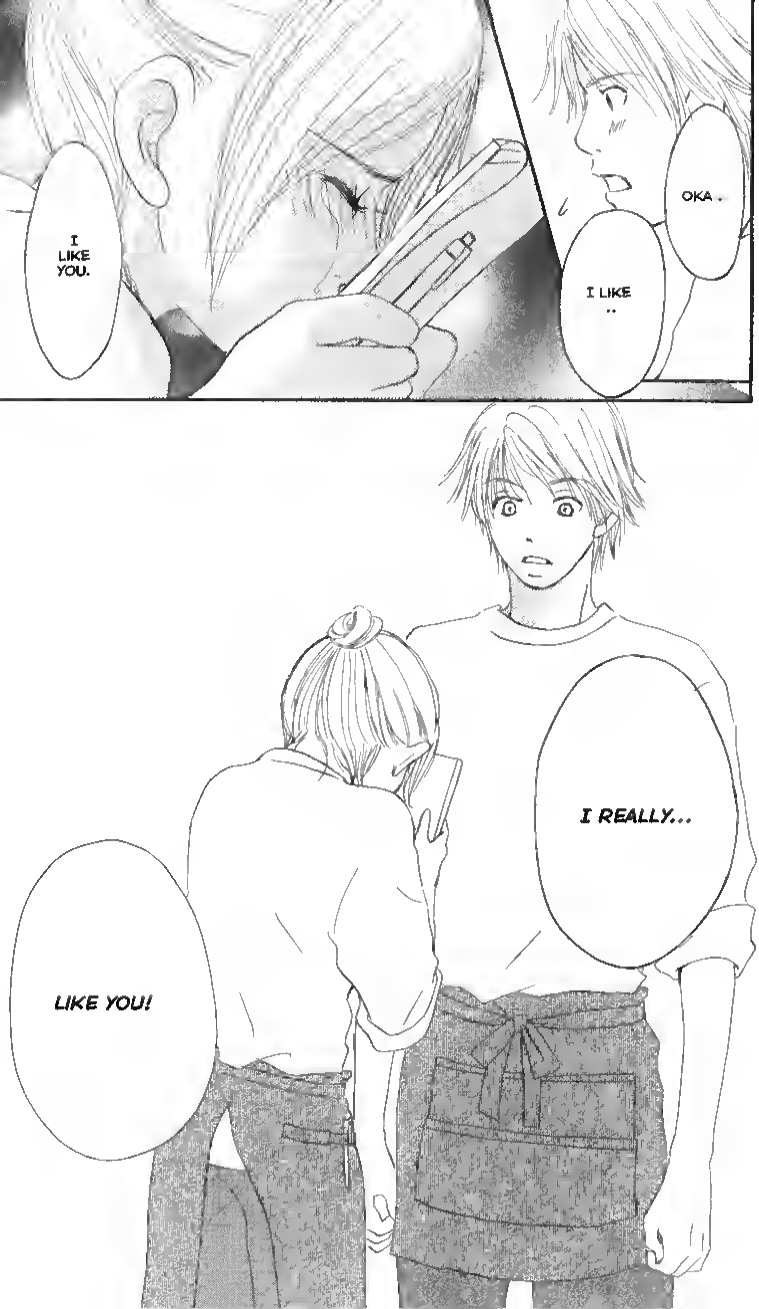

MIKI-CHAN IS QUITTING .. BOO-HOO!
I DID EVERY THING I COULD TO CONVINCE HER TO STAY ...

HE'S FINALLY
TALKING TO ME AGAIN.
BUT THIS WILL PROBABLY BE THE LAST TIME.
SASAKI,
I WANT YOU TO DO ME A FAVOR.
CAN YOU PLEASE...
MAKE A CUP OF CARAMEL MILK TEA FOR ME?

HUH?
BECAUSE I WANT TO WRITE DOWN THE STEPS.
SURE.
CLINK
CLINK

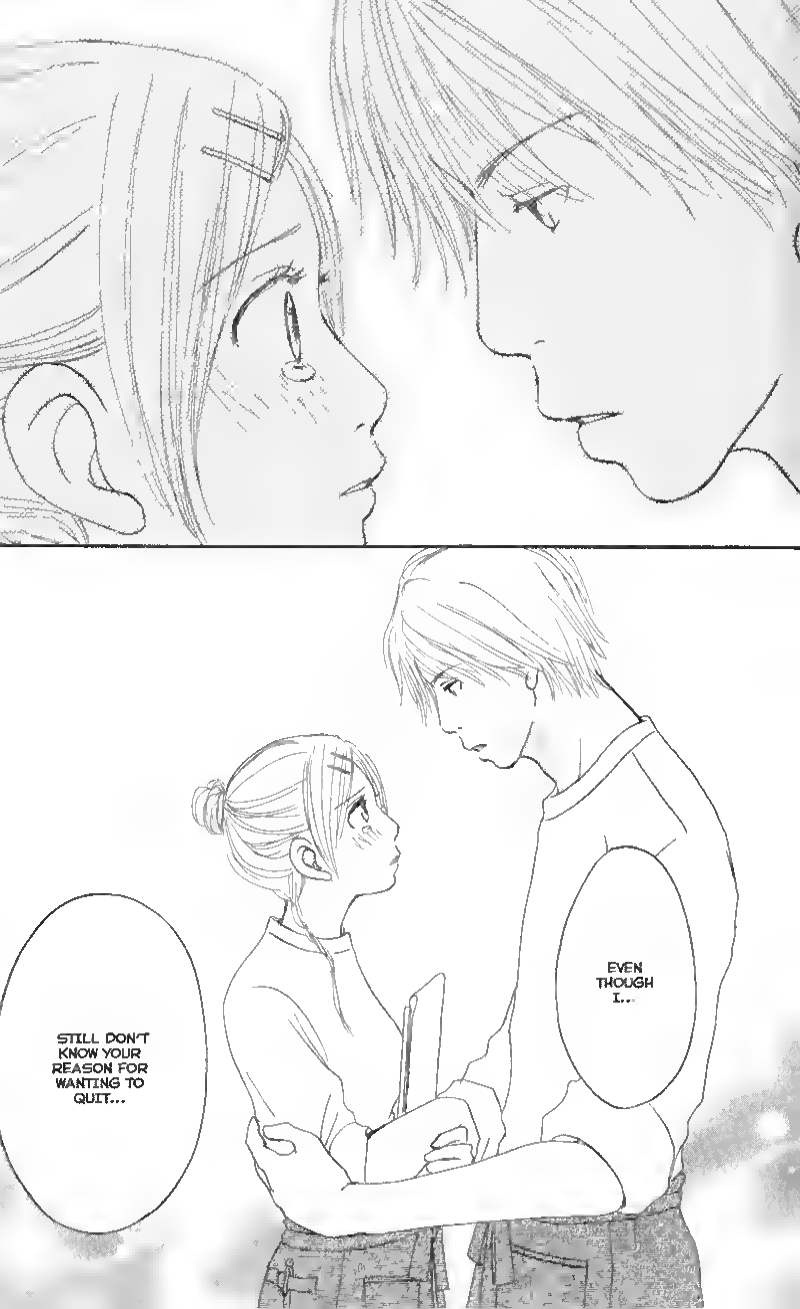
AFTER THE TEA LEAVES UNCURL,
PUT THE MILK IN,
BUT DON'T LET IT BREW FOR TOO LONG
TO ME, THIS FRAGRANCE ...
REPRESENTS SASAKI.
HMM ... AND THEN, USE THE TEA STRAINER ..
WHEN I SMELL THIS SCENT IN THE FUTURE ...
IT WILL ALWAYS REMIND ME OF HIM.

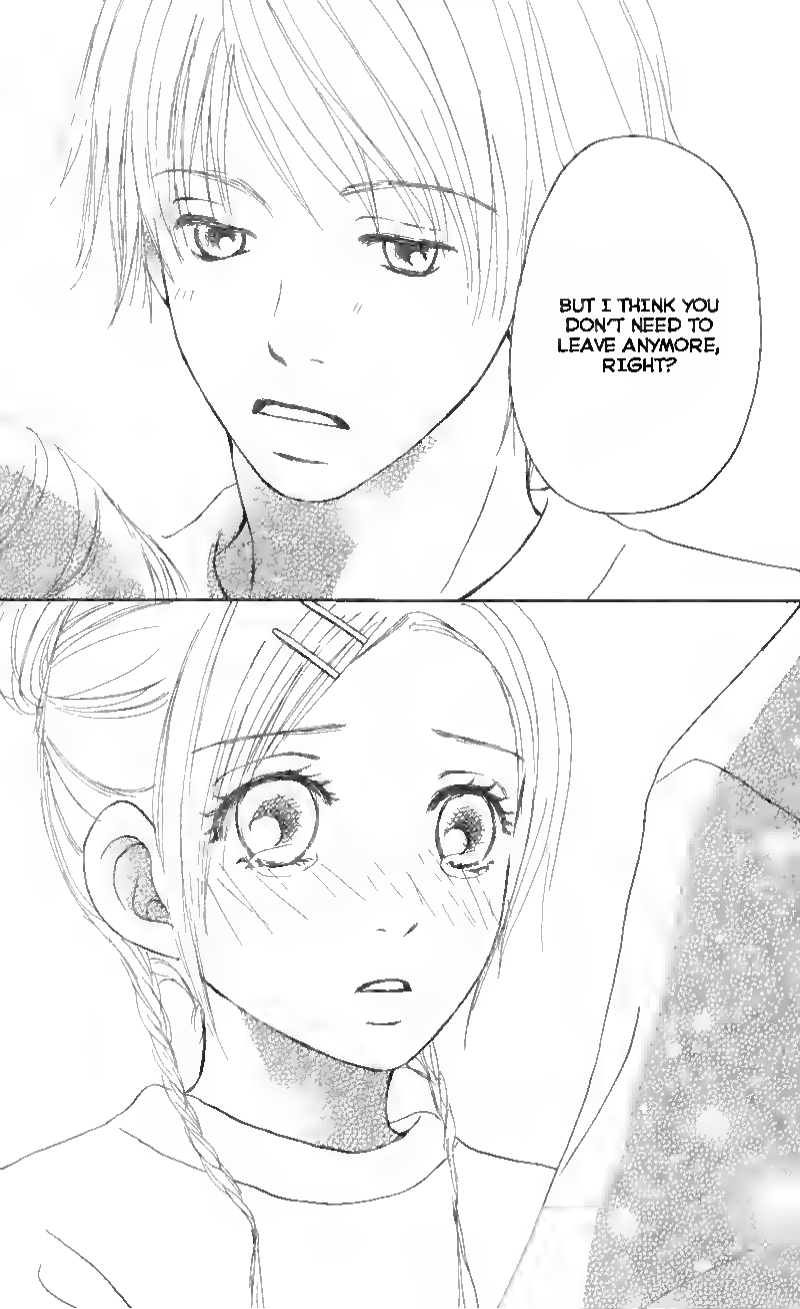
I HAVE TO MAKE IT MYSELF...
BECAUSE I LIKE HIM.
SASAKI'S CARAMEL MILK TEA...
...OKADA?
NO...


I LIKE YOU.
OKA.
I LIKE..
I REALLY...
LIKE YOU!

HAH ...?
I BEG YOU, PLEASE...
PLEASE DON'T SAY YOU HATE ME.
"EVEN IF YOU SAY IT LIKE THAT, TROUBLE IS STILL TROUBLE."
"EVEN IF THEY'VE ALREADY BEEN REJECTED, MAYBE THEY STILL DON'T WANT TO GIVE UP!"
THEN WHY DID YOU STICK UP FOR THOSE GIRLS?!

OH ... SO THAT'S WHY ...
THAT TIME ...
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO TELL THEM THAT I HAVE SOMEONE I LIKE AND REJECT THEM THAT WAY.


STILL DON'T KNOW YOUR REASON FOR WANTING TO QUIT...
EVEN THOUGH I...


BUT I THINK YOU DON'T NEED TO LEAVE ANYMORE, RIGHT?

YEAH
..
I GUESS
..
I DON'T NEED TO ANYMORE

Betsucomiフラワーコミックス

宇佐美真紀

MAKI USAMI

CARAMEL MILK TEA

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MAKI USAMI

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●表題作紹介

★"一目惚れ"なんて絶対ありえない！と思っていた女子高生の希。甘い恋に憧れてはいるものの、どこかあきらめモード中。そんな希が、カフェの店員さんに一目惚れ!? その場で告白するも虚しく玉砕。落ち込む希だが、運命のイタズラで(?)、彼の働くカフェでバイトをすることになってしまい…!?

●収録作品／キャラメルミルクティー／ふたりの時間　キラキラノキモチ「No.1ガール

CARAMEL MILK TEA

Story 1

by Maki Usami

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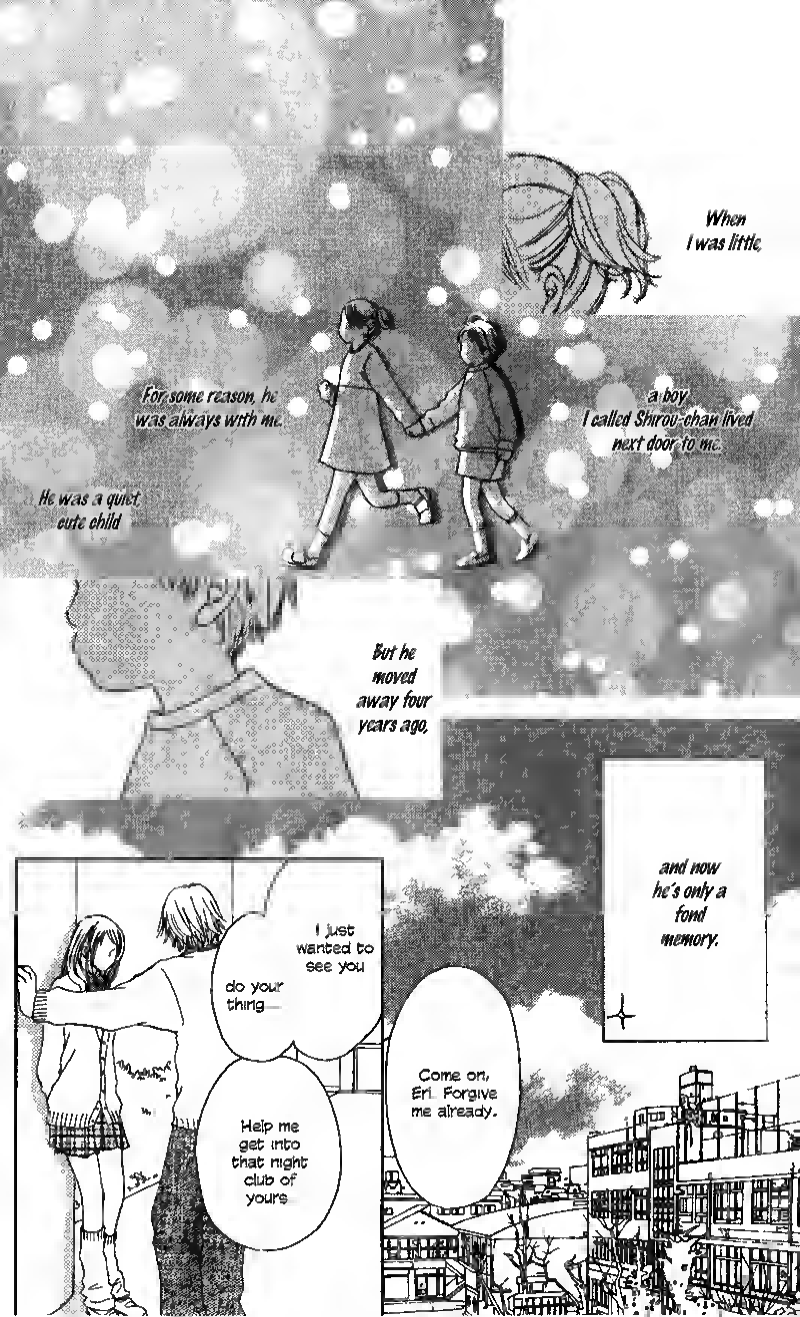

When I was little,
a boy I called Shirou-chan lived next door to me.
For some reason, he was always with me.
He was a quiet, cute child
But he moved away four years ago,
and now he's only a fond memory.
I just wanted to see you do your thing—
Help me get into that night club of yours
Come on, Eri. Forgive me already.

Takami Eri, currently a sophomore.
You know,
whether I forgive you or not,
I just don't feel like making up with you. OK?
Don't get mad at me!
You were the one doing a strip tease
You were all dressed up and strung up off your stick
I was just helping my mom at her bar!
And it's just a bunch of decent people who love karaoke!
It's not that kind of place...
Damn it! Let go of me!
!!
It's OK No one's around
STOP!

No!
BA-DUMP
Ah!
...
Keep off the grass
BAM
WHO THE HELL DID THAT ?!
VANISHED
Huh?

Sorry about that.
And thanks,
That idiot didn't even realize you were right in front of him.
He's gone
...
WHERE THE HELL DID YOU GO?!
stomp
stomp
stomp
Shirou-chan.
The Shirou-chan that left four years ago...
...returned last month.
But that quiet, cute boy...

humph
We broke up.
ERI.
You sure go out with some jerks.
...has become somewhat of a smart ass.
Huh?
Don't you think you're romanticizing the past?
Sob
Sob
Shirou-chan, you didn't mouth off like this when you were a kid.
He's really a jerk, huh?
Dammit
How can I make him give up?
He's still looking for me...
Where'd you go?
roaming
walking around
Scary
What a stubborn guy
Oh, Eri? Where are you?
ERI-CHAN

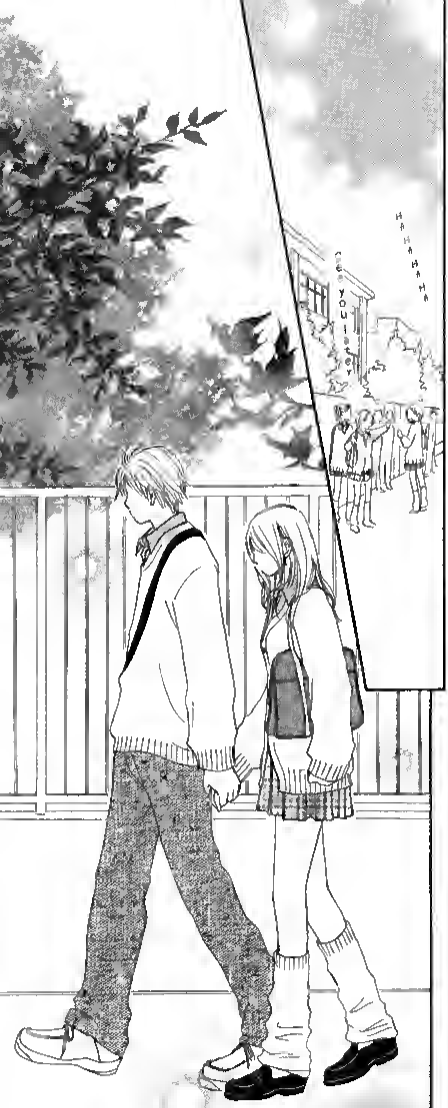
How did he..?
I need to put an end to this once and for all
Shirou-chan, do you have a girl-friend?
WHAT?
No way. Nothing like that.
What the hell?
Well . will you go out with me?
I can't just use him like this?
Sorry. Forget it.
OK
OH, NO.
Crap! What the hell am I doing?

Let's go out
...Huh?
I'm fine with it.
HUH?
Really? He agreed so quickly
I wonder why?
Uh um...
Shirou-chan?
Don't you have someone you like?
Is this really OK?

Uh... it's you.
Um... Well...
What?!
I've always...
...liked you, Eri,
ever since we were kids.

What?
What?!
Gulp
WHAT?!
Could he... be kidding with me?
2 - 1
What am I going to do...?
I led him on by saying that and now...

... kinda happy somehow.
... it does make me feel...
"... liked you."
But...
"I've always..."
Yu-
Yuuji.
SUDDENLY APPEARS
Eri.
You're leaving now, right? Wanna go somewhere?
Sorry, but...
there's someone else now
Oh?
Who is it?
Eri.
let's go


HAHAHAHA
SEE YOU TOMORROW

Oh!
Shirou-chan!

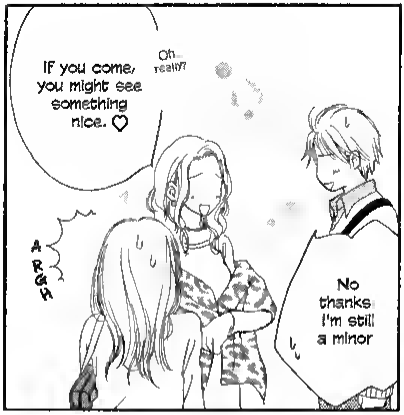
What the... It's you!
Let's go,
Eh?
Eh?
ARGH

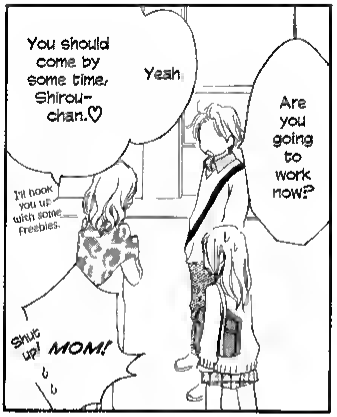
His hand has ...
...turned into a man's hand.
"I like you."
B LUSH

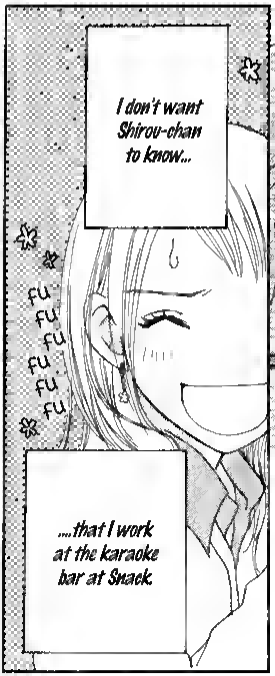
Shirou-chan.
Why.
Why'd you like me?
Umm...
I dunno..
When we were kids, everyone made fun of you.
You had no dad, and your mom worked at club bars.
"Oh, hee-hee"
I hear Eri's mom works in a slimy business"
Drink, drink!"
They teased you, but you fought back
"You like drinking so much, HUH?"
Splash
Ah!
Uh!
But...
.. you also cried when you were alone.
Yeah, well

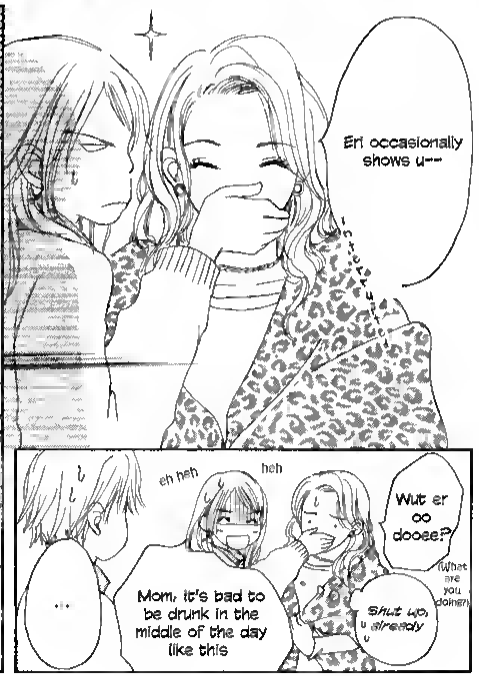
It made me want to protect you
I've always thought that
...
Well, you asked!

he actually did take care of me.
Isn't it YOU who's romanticizing the past?
BLUSH
Well,
Welcome home, Eri!
Mom!
Oh, it's Shirou-chan, huh?
CLICK
...just using a good person like him.
And now I'm ...


IF you come, you might see something nice. ♡
Oh really?
ARGH
No thanks. I'm still a minor


You should come by some time, Shirou-chan.♡
Yeah
Are you going to work now?
I'll hook you up with some freebies.
Shut up! MOM!


I don't want Shirou-chan to know...
fu fu fu fu fu fu
...that I work at the karaoke bar at Snack.


Eri occasionally shows u---
eh heh
heh
Wut er oo doose?
(What are you doing?)
...
Mom, it's bad to be drunk in the middle of the day like this
Shut up, already

He only knows
the innocent me from our childhood.
Hmm...
The park entrance has changed, hasn't it?
Yeah
A couple of years ago they did some construction to clean it up.
Ohhh.
This town's changed a lot in four years.
...
Do you want to go in?
Sure.
Wow!
This huge tree is still here!
They put up a fence since the tree is so old.

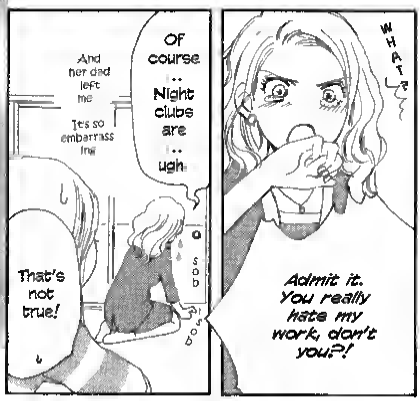
Oh
I remember something
What?
You dug a pit around here
and then waited for me
You covered it with fallen leaves
Oh!
Just like these
You didn't fall for it at all did you?
That's because you were so terrible at hiding it!
...to share the same memories.
It's kinda nice...
Now that I think about it, my memories...
...are exactly the same as his.
Yeah, and,
Shirou-chan, you--
Hey..
Can you stop calling me Shirou-chan?
Huh?
I'm not a kid anymore..

Sorry
He's so cute...
Um
How about...
Shirou?
Damn!!
Don't laugh
fu
But it sounds kinda weird

Shirou ...
Sigh

Where's my bag? My bag!
I'm late! I'm late!
Quit being childish.
I already have a hard time by myself!
There got nothing to do with you being such a spaz.
No way.
If you have enough free time to lie around, why don't you help [redacted] at the shop?
Hey, Eri!
THUD
Oh, right. I'm not supposed to say "chan"...
Shirou-chan...

but when I think about what Shirou would think,
I'm scared.
If you know... how would you see me then?
Shirou...


And her dad left me
It's so embarrassing!
Of course... Night clubs are... ugh.
That's not true!
SOB
WHAT?
Admit it. You really hate my work, don't you?!

Didn't you say you were late?
It's just...
I don't hate that Mom has to...
... work at that place and wait on customers,

I was just using him to get rid of my ex-boyfriend.
And now I can't even tell him the truth.
What's the matter?
I'm such a bad person.
Crap.
It's Shirou. He'll understand, won't he?
In the end,
I couldn't tell him the truth
You look kinda sick
Huh?
I'm fine. Why?

Please...
Shirou
... don't hate me.
Um—
We need to talk.
Oh, don't worry. I've given up on you, Eri.
Yuuji!
What the hell?
He really is a jerk
I—
Hey! Eri!

You're always changing boyfriends, anyway.
Isn't that right, Eri?
When we broke up, you would have gone out with just anyone, huh?
Even if it wasn't that guy.

She's good at making men feel good.
and hangs out with them at night clubs.
She gets dressed up all fancy
she's that kind of girl.
As your ex, I'll give your new boyfriend a warning:
...
It's a family business, you know?
AHAHAHAHAHA-HA
SHUT THE FUCK UP!
IF you say one more word, I will
FUCKING KILL YOU!

Ohhh! So scary
Shirou
I don't need your advice
I understand Eri more than you ever could!
Ooooh? Is that so?
Well, I hope you're happy, then ♡
I'm sorry...
I'm sorry, Shirou...
Eri, forget about what he said.

...
Why are you apologizing?
Was what he said true?
I'm so sorry...
I'm sorry...

Fine
I see how it is.
Eri, please!
Today's payday. There's going to be tons of customers!
Please?
Pretty please?!
I'm home
...Fine. I'll go work
Eh?
She's not resisting today, huh.

It doesn't matter anymore.
Eri! Let's go
Coming
KA-CHACK
Oh Good evening
Are you going out?
SHIROU?!
Oh, Eri
Are you two going to work?
It's Shirou-chan
That's right
Eri's helping me tonight ♡
People say we look like sisters ♡
See... Doesn't she look pretty?

Yes, she does.
Liar.
As if you would look at me.
Well, see you later, then
Ah
Good-bye now
Come on
Let's go, Eri

Eri
?
I'm sorry, Mom.
I can't go after all!
What?!

Wait! Eri-P!
SHIROU!
SNATCH

Take a good look!
Aren't you just idealizing me?
I've become a person --
...who dresses like this to work with her mom
and uses you just to make her ex leave her alone!
Stop holding onto that childhood image of me. You don't know what kind of a bad person I am now, do you?!

This is the kind of girl I am!
But...
...don't hate me.

Silly
Si-silly?
swoosh

I could never hate you
Hate you?
I said OK despite that
I didn't care as long as I had a chance to be with you
I knew you were using me
In fact, I was using you, too
All I want is to know what you think of me now
So, how about it?

I love you.
Didn't those two break up?
Or are they still together?

What?
Sorry to disappoint you.
Those two? There's no way they'd be together for long.
Dude
That's harsh
We didn't split up.
And, so...
Oh, no.
...we'll keep reminding ourselves what's important enough to protect.
From now on, all that matters is each other.

The End

"Our Time" first published in *Betsucomi* in 2002.

OUR TIME

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AND I AM NOW SPENDING MY LAST CHRIST-MAS ON THIS STREET.
AFTER NOVEMBER, THE CHRISTMAS ATMOSPHERE STARTS TO FILL THE STREET.
BECAUSE I HAVE TO GET READY TO MOVE ON THAT DAY.
UH ..
I'M NOT GOING.
Year 1 Class 1
Christmas Party
12/23
Place: Karaoke Box
Cost: 2000 yen
HEY! HOW'S IT GOING?
ARE YOU GONNA GO?
WHAT ABOUT NARU?

MIYAMOTO-KUN AND I ARE IN DIFFERENT CLASSES, SO WE RARELY GET TO TALK.
I JUST HAVE A ONE-SIDED CRUSH.
IT'S NOT GOING WELL, BUT...
Once this semester ends, I have to move
OH, RIGHT.. YOU'RE MOVING ON DECEMBER 25TH.
EH?
UMM ...
RIGHT!
THEN YOU HAVE TO FINISH KNITTING THIS BEFORE CHRISTMAS DAY!
THAT WAY YOU CAN GIVE IT TO MIYAMOTO-KUN
SHOCK
THUD
OH! SORR ...
NARU, LET'S GO HOME!
OK.
BUT... IT'S ALREADY THE END.

KAN-CHAN, YOU'RE SCARING HER.
YOU'RE SCARY
HA? WHAT'D YOU SAY?
I HAVE A HANGOVER. OK?
EX-
YEAH?
EXCUSE ME.
WHISPER
HOW RUDE!
I don't know how to handle Kanzaki
He's improvident and insincere.
We're in the same class, but in the end I'm still not used to him

I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT A GUY LIKE HIM IS FRIENDS WITH MIYAMOTO-KUN
A GUY AT THE TOP OF THE CLASS LIKE MIYAMOTO-KUN ...
OH...
SORRY, YOU GO ON WITHOUT ME.
I LEFT MY YARN IN THE CLASS-ROOM.
1 - 2
WHAT IS THIS?
CHOPSTICKS?
POP
Pluck Pluck Pluck
DANGLE
...

AH!!
Startle
AH/ IS THIS YOURS, NARUMI-SAN?
AH!!
SORRY, SORRY.
Dangle
...
KAN-CHAN ...
I'M GOING TO THE LIBRARY FOR A WHILE.
HEY, MIYA.
TER ... TERRIBLE ...
Dangle

IT'S MIYAMOTO-KUN!
EH ...
YOU ARE ...
GRIN
NARUMI-SAN, RIGHT?
YOU'RE ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMIT-TEE WITH ME, RIGHT?
YE-
YES!
BLUSH
THAT'S IT, SO ...
YOU GO HOME FIRST
UH YEAH ...
ba-dump
ba-dump

NARUMI-SAN..
IT'S ANNOYING TO RECEIVE A SCARF,
WHEN IT'S NOT MADE BY SOMEONE YOU LIKE.
THAT'S PROBABLY TRUE, BUT
BUT...
drip
EH?!
YOU SERIOUS?
...

FOR REAL?
GRAB
BLINK
BLINK
COME WITH ME!
EH?

AND THIS ONE'S OK, TOO.
HE WANTS ME TO BUY THIS TO GIVE TO MIYAMOTO-SAN...?
MIYAMOTO WILL PROBABLY LIKE THIS TYPE.
MACHINE
A CLOTHING STORE?
IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SCARVES ...
I DIDN'T BRING MONEY TODAY, SO I'LL BUY IT NEXT TIME.
OH, REALLY?
THAT'S ONE YOU WANT FOR YOURSELF, RIGHT?
No matter how you look at this
WHY DON'T YOU CHOOSE THIS ONE!
OH? THIS ONE'S NOT BAD EITHER
Leopard Pattern
IF YOU ARE GOING TO KNIT IT YOURSELF,
WHY NOT KNIT ONE FOR HIM AFTER YOU START DATING?

AH!
THAT IS. .
THIS PERSON IS PRETTY KIND ...
I...
I NEED TO GO DOWN THIS STREET TO GO HOME.
HUH?
WHY?
BECAUSE WHEN I WALKED DOWN THIS STREET BEFORE, I SAW A LOT OF PRETTY LIGHTS,
SO THAT'S WHY I GO THERE A LOT TO SEE ..

WOW ...
?
WHY DID HE FOLLOW ME?
PRE-
PRETTY, ISN'T IT?
WHOA!

I'M MOVING SOON,
SO I'M TRYING TO COMMIT THIS BEAUTIFUL SCENERY TO MEMORY THE BEST I CAN.
I KNOW A BETTER PLACE.
EH?
...
LOVE HOTEL
No, I don't want to!
He he he This is the place.
NO...
EH? EH?
COME!!
JUST FOLLOW ME!
A ...
A BETTER PLACE?

NO-!!
Mommy, help me!
LOOK!

ISN'T IT?
ALL OF IT IS ...
IT'S BEAUTIFUL...
IT'S WORTH COMPLIMENTING, RIGHT?

IN THE MIDST OF THIS WONDER-OUSLY LIT NIGHT SCENE...
Look at how tall that tree over there is
SEEING HIS BRIGHT SMILE...
AT THIS MOMENT
I'M FULLY DRAWN TO HIM
SO TAKE CARE.
地下鉄
SUBWAY

HE'S UNEXPECTEDLY...
THANKS FOR SEEING ME TO THE STATION.
BYE, THEN!
So unexpected
MAYBE HE'S NOT SUCH A BAD PERSON ...
WHOA!
WHAT'S UP?
OH! MORNING
EH?
BELOW!
OUTSIDE THE WINDOW!
Sparkle

WHAT ARE THEY HANGING?
ARE'NT THEY HANGING LIGHTS ON THE TREE?
HE WOULDN'T BE ...
That's doesn't go on the tree!
Kanzaki you're an idiot!
TRYING TO DECORATE IT LIKE THAT HOUSE ON THAT STREET?
Pfft
ISN'T THAT PRETTY STUPID?
FINALS ARE HERE AND THEY'RE GETTING ALL EXCITED OVER THAT.
Oh, thanks
I brought it!
KANZAKI?

THEY'RE STILL AT IT...
IF IT WAS BEFORE, I MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT THE SAME WAY.
HEY! IT'S NARUMI.
I HAVE IT.
HEY, WHAT ABOUT THE LIGHT PIECE OVER THERE?
YEAH...
chime
Ha ha ha...
MIYA ALREADY PERSUADED HIM.
THAT GUY REALLY HAS HIS WAYS.
HE TOLD THE TEACHER, "WE HOPE FOR THERE TO BE A PLACE WITH A SOOTHING ATMOSPHERE AT SCHOOL."
HEY, NARUMI-SAN!
YOU'RE REALLY SOME-THING! THIS IS...
WON'T THE TEACHER BE ANGRY?

ISN'T IT THAT WHENEVER YOU SEE THESE SPARKLY AND GLITTERING THINGS,
YOU FEEL BETTER?
HERE'S THE GARLAND YOU WANTED.
I...
OH, THANKS.
CAN I HELP, TOO?

LOOK!
IT'S SPARK-
LING AGAIN
...
So for
Naru-
mi-san
Doesn't it
match?
Garland
Wow!

NARUMI-CHAN, GRAB THE BOX OVER THERE
ALL RIGHT
OUCH!
Wrap
WHOA! DID YOU CUT YOUR-SELF?
WHAT HAP-PE-NED?
WOW THE BLOOD'S
NARUMI-CHAN'S HAND GOT CUT!
OH! IT'S NOTHING, IT'S NOTHING.
STUPID!
IT'S BLEEDING A LOT!
GRAB

...
I'M TAKING HER TO TREAT THE WOUND, SO
I'LL HAVE TO LEAVE CLEANUP TO YOU
ALL RIGHT
保健室
Rattle
IT'S OK?
YEAH, THE CUT WASN'T TOO DEEP
THANK GOD
...

THANK YOU..
KA-
KAN-CHAN!
EVERY ONE!!
SEEMS TO CALL YOU THAT...
YEAH!
KAN-CHAN!
...
YOU KNOW EVEN IF YOU YELLED SO BOLDLY
TOORU!

MIYA.
NO WAY! YOU'VE BEEN WORKING 'TIL NOW AND YOU'RE STILL NOT HOME?
OH? NARUMI-SAN, YOU'RE HERE, TOO?
YEAH...
YOU, TOO?
I STAYED AT SCHOOL TO STUDY.
HA HA...
STAYING AT SCHOOL TO STUDY
WELL, I'M GOING TO LEAVE FIRST.
YOU GUYS TAKE YOUR TIME.
EH?

UM...
KAN-CHAN.
SORRY, I HAVE TO LEAVE, TOO.
KAN-CHAN!
...
YOU'RE SO DENSE!
I LEFT SO YOU COULD TALK TO HIM!
EH?

UH ...
UH ...
REALLY?
...
WHY...
DID I CHASE AFTER HIM, I WONDER...?
HOW DID YOUR MATH FINAL GO?
I MIGHT BE SCREWED.
AH... FINALS ARE FINALLY OVER

LOOK,
I THINK IT'S REALLY PRETTY LOOKING DOWN FROM ABOVE!
LOOKING DOWN FROM ABOVE, HUH?
YEAH!
NARU,
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
KAN-CHAN
Aren't you cold?
IF WE PLUG IT IN, IT'LL BE EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL!
I THOUGHT ABOUT IT,
Something about how it would be dangerous
BUT THE TEACHER WON'T LET US.
YEAH..
..
LET'S GO PLUG IT IN...

LET'S GO!
grip
EH EH?!
OK!
LET'S PLUG IT IN!!
EH?

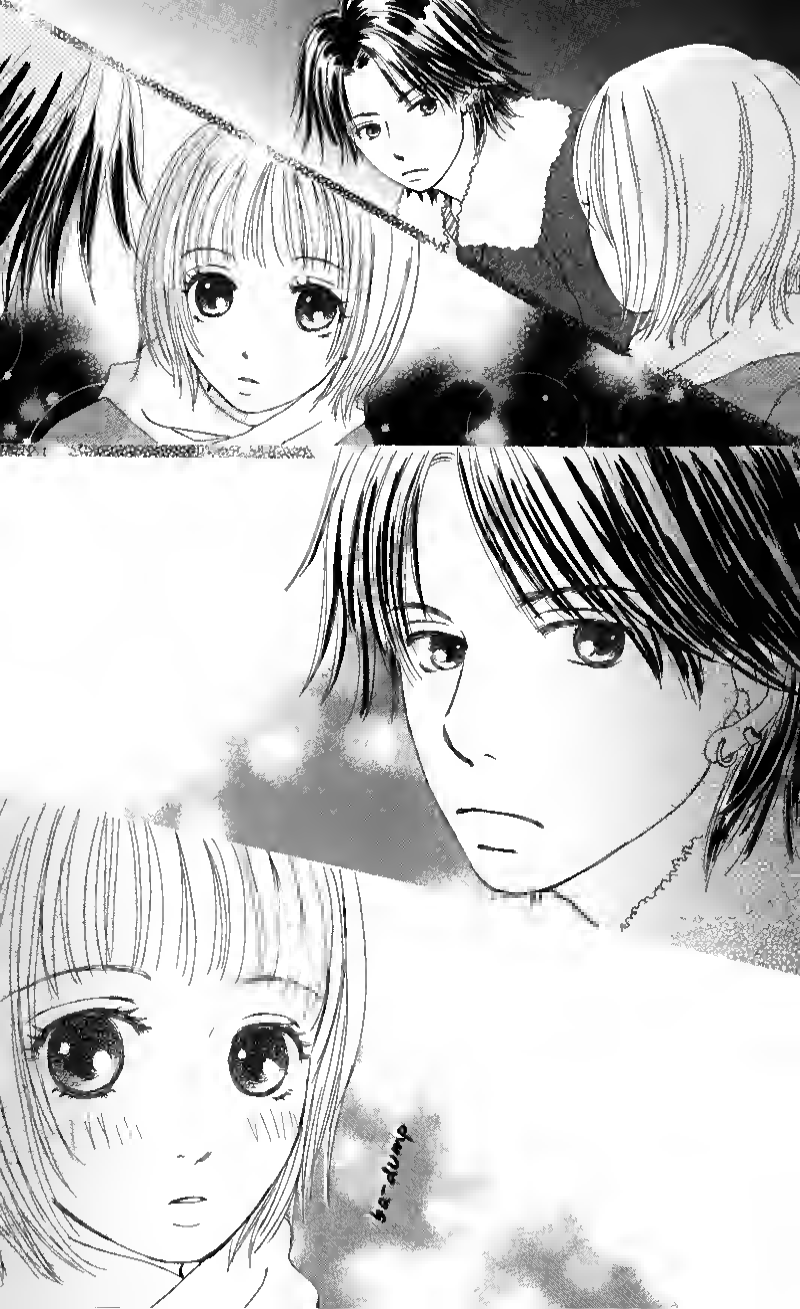
Teacher
sneak
sneak
LIGHTS

ARE YOU ...
COMING TO THE PARTY ON THE 23RD?
THE END OF THE YEAR CEREMONY ON THE 20TH IS THE LAST DAY..
I'M STILL NOT FINISHED WITH THE MOVING STUFF
YEAH ...
HAVE YOU —
BOUGHT THE PRESEHT FOR MIYA YET?
THE LAST ...
YEAH —

I GREW UP WITH HIM.
WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER SINCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
SO WE'RE PRETTY CLOSE ...
HE'S A REALLY GOOD GUY.
EH?
OH!
NO, NOT YET...
ALL FINISHED
SUCCESS!!
YEAH ...
GONE TO BUY MIYAMOTO'S PRESENT YET...?
WHY HAVEN'T I...
LET'S TURN IT ON.
♪
OK.
♡

Extension cord
IT'S LIGHTING UP!
AWE-SOME!
Too beautiful.
YAY, YAY!!

IT'S BEAUTI-FUL...
YEAH.
IT'S WORTH ALL THE WORK.
YEAH.
...


ya-dumo

SORRY
I GOT LOST IN THE MOMENT, SO JUST FORGET ABOUT IT.

SHOVE
I HATE HIM.

I HATE ...
KAN-CHAN!
brrrrrrrrrrrrr
HELLO NARU-CHAN?
IT'S ME!
I CALLED TO TELL YOU THAT ABOUT THE CHRISTMAS PARTY
WE VE DECIDED TO MOVE IT
YOU'RE GOOD IF WE MAKE IT THE 20TH RIGHT?
AND WE CAN DO THE FAREWELL PARTY FOR YOU THEN TOO
YOU NAVE TO COME!
OK ...

NARU-CHA
FAREWE
PARTY
NEXT,
TO WISH NARUMI-SAN HAP-PINESS FROM ALL OF US,
WE HAVE FLOWERS
Naru-chan!!
Take care!
KAN-CHAN DIDN'T COME
HE DIDN'T EVEN COME TO THE CLOSING CEREMONY
ESPECIALLY FOR MAKING TODAY'S CHRISTMAS PARTY INTO MY FAREWELL PARTY.
I'M REALLY HAPPY.
IF YOU WANT TO THANK SOMEONE, THEN THANK KANZAKI!
HE'S THE ONE WHO SAID WE SHOULD DO A FAREWELL PARTY.
UH —
THANK YOU FOR TODAY, EVERY-BODY.
Merry Xmas
Merry Xmas
Xmas

KAN-CHAN ...?
DURING THE STUDY BREAK, HE RAN SOME ERRANDS ON HIS OWN,
HE EVEN TOOK ON MAKING RESERVATIONS AT THE RESTAURANT AND CONTACTING EVERYONE HIMSELF.
KAN-CHAN ...
"ISN'T IT GREAT?"

"ISN'T IT THAT WHENEVER YOU SEE THESE SPARKLY AND GLITTERING THINGS,
YOU FEEL BETTER?"
"FORGET ABOUT IT!"

DECEMBER 24TH.
THE STREETS OF CHRISTMAS ARE PACKED WITH PEOPLE.
BUT I
DON'T WANT TO FORGET
...
EH? YOU'RE GOING OUT?
WE'RE LEAVING TOMORROW, SO DON'T STAY OUT TOO LATE!
OK.

CLANK
KAN-
CHAN

NARU,
I WENT TO YOUR HOUSE, AND
YOUR FAMILY SAID YOU WERE HERE
—
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
AREN'T YOU MOVING TOMORROW?
HAVE YOU GIVEN YOUR PRESENT TO MIYA YET?

WHAT...
IT'S FOR YOU. A PRESENT.
AREN'T YOU GIVING IT TO THE WRONG PERSON?!
I'M NOT!
I...
LIKE YOU.

I CAN'T FORGET IT.
BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO FORGET ..
EVEN THAT KISS ..
YOU ...
STOP SAYING THESE THINGS ..

IT'LL MAKE ME
NOT WANT TO LET YOU GO EVEN MORE.

〈キラキラノキモチ〉＊おわり＊Betsucomi2002年12月号に掲載

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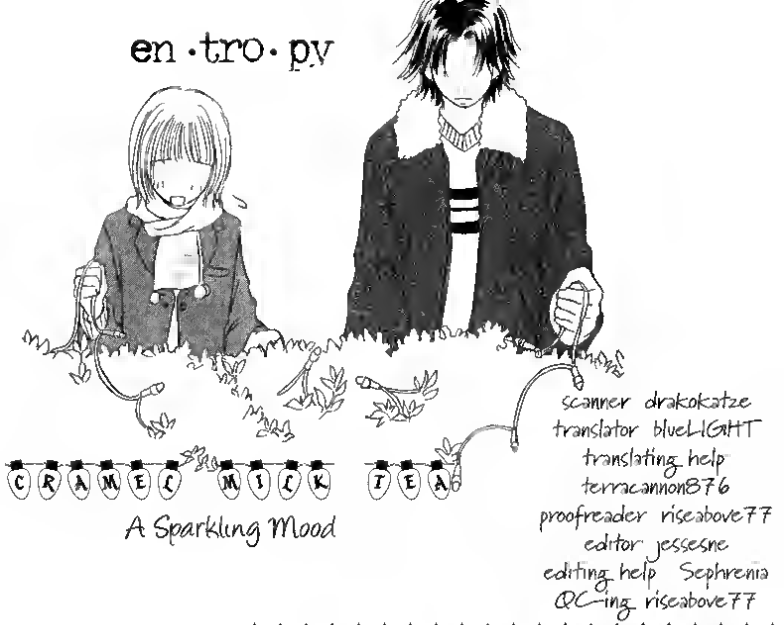
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CRAMEL MILK TEA
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NO. 1 GIRL

Usami's Thoughts

In my opinion, Kirkira no Kimochi's Miyamoto-kun is fairly similar to this story's (No.1 girl's) Hajime.

Both of them have glasses, and both think like adults even though they are mere high school students. Oh! And their hairstyles are almost exactly alike, too! If Hajime's hair was just a little bit longer, it would be just like Miyamoto-kun's!

But their greatest difference is....

Hajime has a girlfriend, while Miyamoto-kun doesn't.
(And she's a model to boot!)

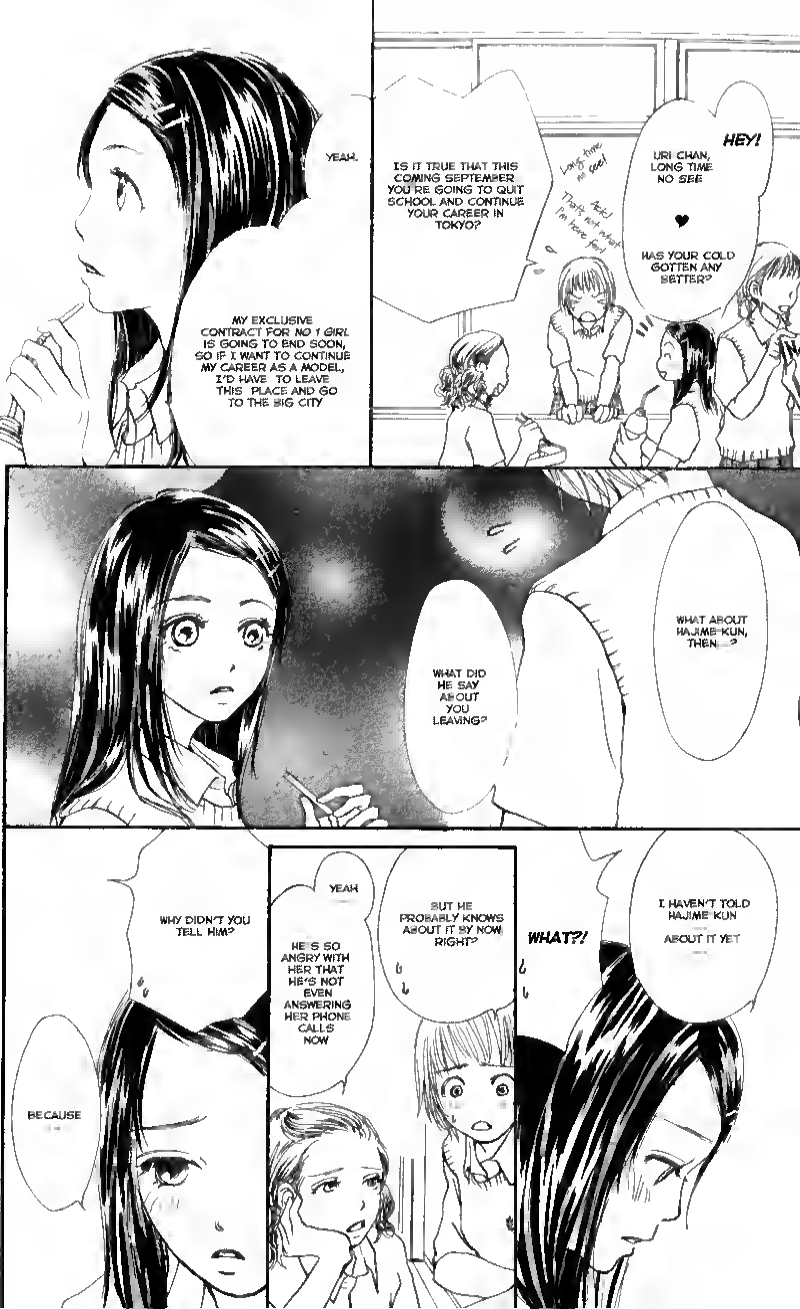
And it seems like Miyamoto-kun's friend took away the girl he liked...

Poor thing.

Do your best, Miyamoto-kun!!
There will surely be a story where you will have a girlfriend!

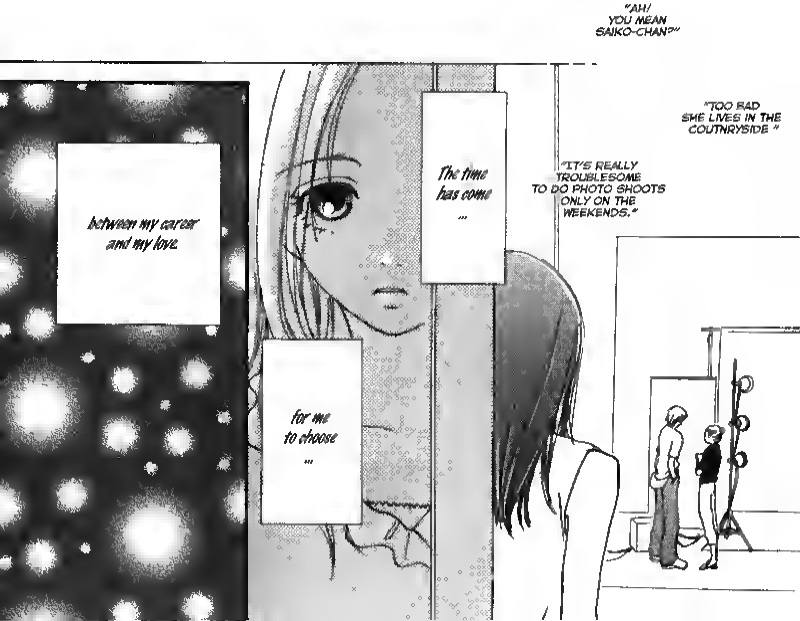
There are just no plans for it, yet (laughs)

I wonder why
I let go of that hand.
Ever since I became a model,
You see, in the summer when I was 17....
SAIKO CHAN, YOU'RE THE COVER GIRL IN THIS ISSUE!!
WOW! THIS IS AMAZING!
KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!
WHY, THANK YOU.
SAIKO!
I never thought that I would one day be confronted with such a choice.
BE STYLISH IN
TOP FASHION PI
SUMMER WEA

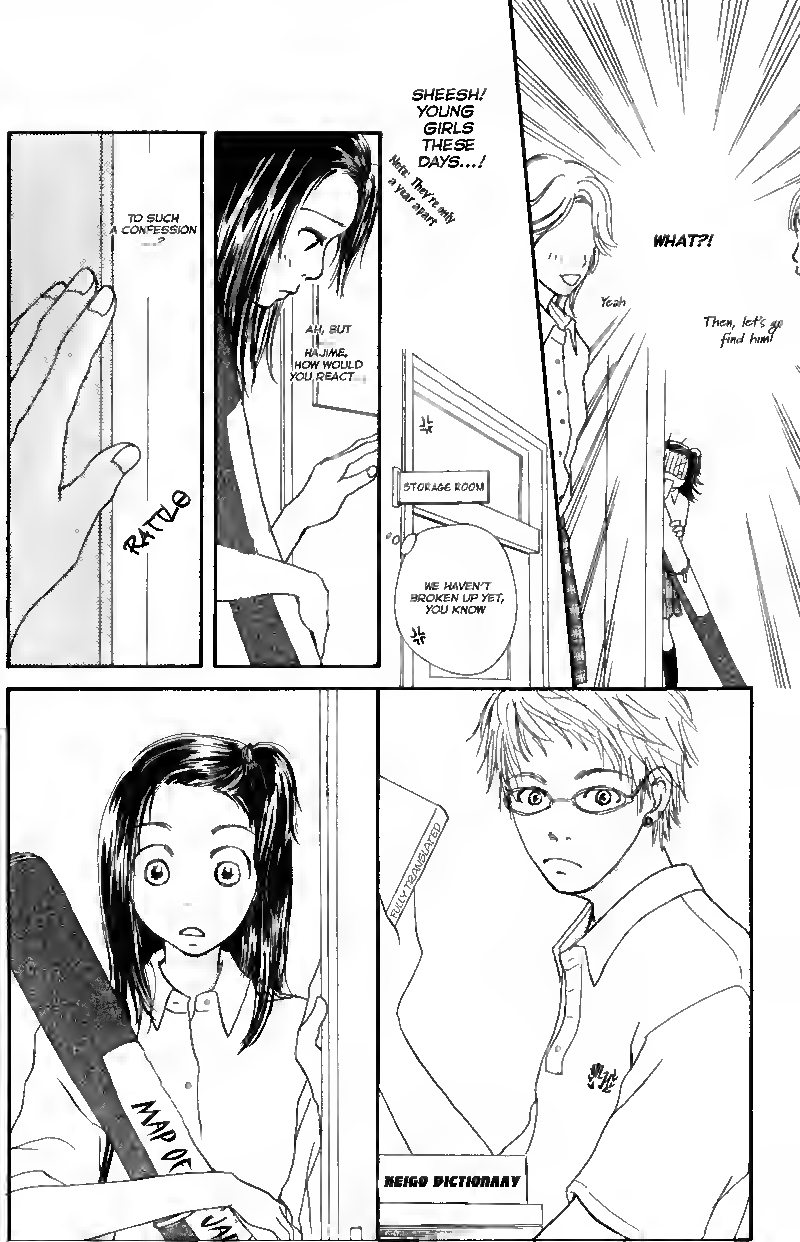

YEAH.
MY EXCLUSIVE CONTRACT FOR NO 1 GIRL IS GOING TO END SOON, SO IF I WANT TO CONTINUE MY CAREER AS A MODEL, I'D HAVE TO LEAVE THIS PLACE AND GO TO THE BIG CITY
IS IT TRUE THAT THIS COMING SEPTEMBER YOU'RE GOING TO QUIT SCHOOL AND CONTINUE YOUR CAREER IN TOKYO?
Long time no see!
That's not what I'm here for!
HEY!
UEI CHAN, LONG TIME NO SEE
HAS YOUR COLD GOTTEN ANY BETTER?
WHAT DID HE SAY ABOUT YOU LEAVING?
WHAT ABOUT HAJIME-KUN, THEN...?
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL HIM?
BECAUSE...
YEAH...
HE'S SO ANGRY WITH HER THAT HE'S NOT EVEN ANSWERING HER PHONE CALLS NOW
BUT HE PROBABLY KNOWS ABOUT IT BY NOW, RIGHT?
WHAT?!
I HAVEN'T TOLD HAJIME-KUN ABOUT IT YET...

It's Hajime-senpai!
AH
Are you going to the cafeteria for lunch?
It's because if I tell him about it
and he tells me not to go then I won't be able to.
Maybe there's no seats in the cafeteria.
What! Aren't those freshman girls?

TURN
HEY!
SAIKO!
IS IT OK IF WE JOIN YOU FOR LUNCH?
HAJIME SENPAI,
HE'S GONNA LEAVE YOU, YOU KNOW!
ARE YOU OK WITH THIS?

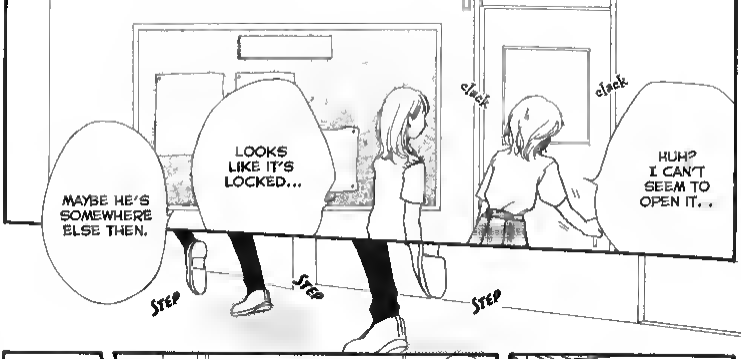

"AH! YOU MEAN SAIKO-CHAN?"
"TOO BAD SHE LIVES IN THE COUTNRYSIDE."
"IT'S REALLY TROUBLESOME TO DO PHOTO SHOOTS ONLY ON THE WEEKENDS."
The time has come ...
for me to choose ...
between my career and my love.

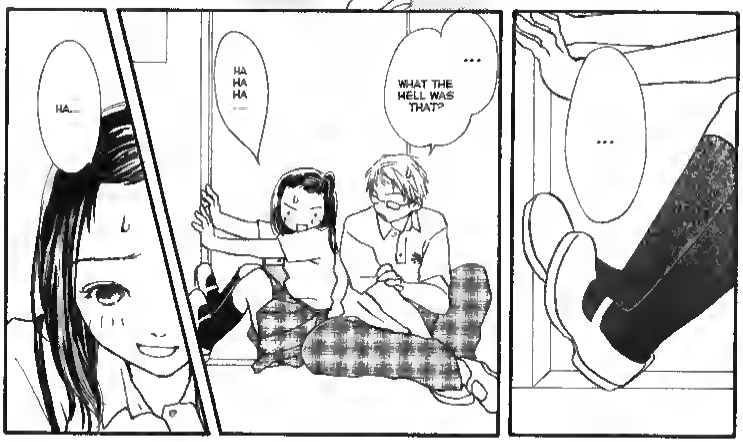
I...
can't keep stalling for time...
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
MAP OF JAPAN
THOSE TWO WILL BREAK UP FOR SURE!
PLEASE, TAKE THIS TO THE STORAGE ROOM.
OH!
SAIKO MANABE, YOU CAME JUST IN TIME!
MAP OF JAPAN
I'LL CONFESS TO HAJIME-SENPAI TODAY!!
OK!
HUH?
THOSE FRESHMAN GIRLS
ARE THE ONES WHO APPROACHED HAJIME EARLIER—
Senpai, CAN WE JOIN YOU FOR LUNCH?
CHATTER
CHATTER
OH! THIS IS OUR CHANCE, THEN!
AH!
SEEMS LIKE HIS MODEL GIRLFRIEND IS GOING TO LEAVE FOR TOKYO SOON


SHEESH! YOUNG GIRLS THESE DAYS...!
Note: They're only a year apart
WHAT?!
Yeah
Then, let's go find him!
STORAGE ROOM
WE HAVEN'T BROKEN UP YET, YOU KNOW
TO SUCH A CONFESSION...?
RATTLE
AH, BUT NAJIME, HOW WOULD YOU REACT...
MAP OF
KEIGO DICTIONARY

SEEMS LIKE HE DOESN'T EVEN WANT TO LOOK AT ME...
MAP OF JAPAN
MAP OF EUROPE
TURN
SLIDE
RATTLE
SIGH
HAVE YOU SEEN HAJIME SENPAI?
I SAW HIM AROUND HERE EARLIER
TRY CALLING HIM OUT...

I-IT'S THOSE GIRLS!
Hey Hase-senpai!
Mai-Senpai!
Mai-Senpai about to leave?
Oh
SLAM
RATTLE
OH!
HAJIME-SENPAI?
MAYBE HE'S IN THAT ROOM..
STORAGE ROOM
SURPRISED
GRAB


MAYBE HE'S SOMEWHERE ELSE THEN.
LOOKS LIKE IT'S LOCKED...
HUH? I CAN'T SEEM TO OPEN IT..
clack
clack
STEP
STEP
STEP


HA...
HA HA HA
...
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?
...

...

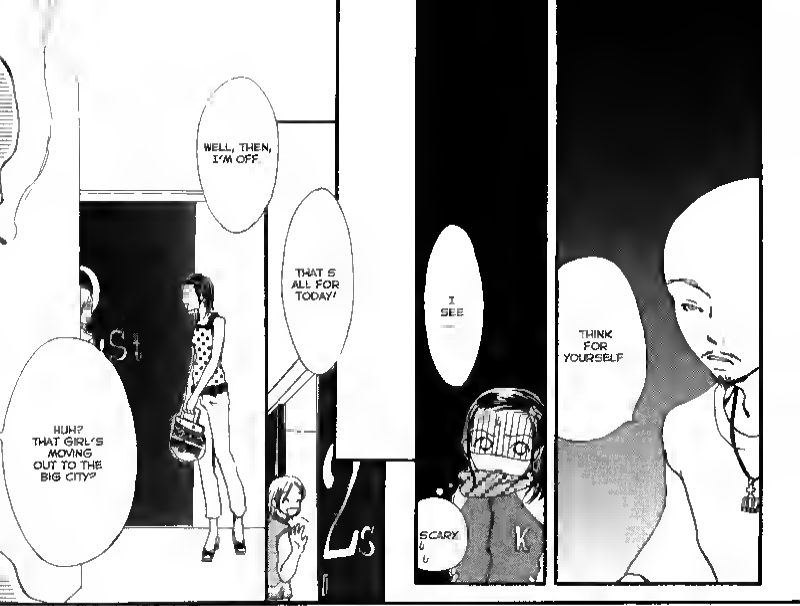
ARE YOU GOING OUT WITH THAT GIRL?
I'VE BEEN SEEING YOU WITH THOSE FRESHMAN GIRLS LATELY...
WHAT?!
TURN
HEY, NOW. .
PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME EVEN MORE ANGRY THAN I AM
I'M ALREADY ANGRY ENOUGH AS IT IS
BESIDES, NOW THAT WE'RE BACK TOGETHER AGAIN, WHY WOULD I GO OUT WITH SOMEONE ELSE?
BUT,
YOU NEVER ANSWERED ANY OF MY CALLS AND KEPT ON IGNORING ME.
THAT'S BECAUSE I WAS REALLY PISSED.

DO YOU WANT TO BREAK UP WITH ME?
I'M...
I KNEW YOU WERE GOING TO TOKYO
THAT'S NOT IT...
I JUST THOUGHT YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO HAVE A LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP
SORRY
BUT, WERE YOU GONNA LEAVE ALL OF A SUDDEN AND NOT TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT IT...?
SOONER OR LATER...
I'M FINE WITH IT...

I'll TS WEAD
I WONDER IF WE'RE GONNA BE ALL RIGHT LIKE THIS.
WE'RE GOING TO BE THREE HOURS AWAY FROM EACH OTHER
IT'S GONNA BE ALL RIGHT
YEAH...
But, just by holding his hand,
I now feel confident that everything's gonna be all right.
I've only been confused and anxious up until now...
Strange...

Club practice
WE STILL HAVE CLUB PRACTICE THIS JUNE EVEN THOUGH IT'S SUMMER VACATION
Is something wrong?
No!
I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN TAKE A DAY OFF FOR IT—
A TRIP?
AND THEN, I'LL TELL EVERYONE
that Miyamae-senpai's on a trip with his girlfriend
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT! I GOT IT!
Ah! How long have you been listening to our conversation?
WE PRACTICE ON THE WEEKDAYS!
3L 3F Junior Member
YOU'LL BE IN BIG TROUBLE IF YOU SKIP OUT ON PRACTICE!
BEAR IN MIND THAT WE HAVE A COMPETITION THIS COMING AUGUST!
I WAS THINKING ABOUT IT, THAT'S ALL...
I KNOW NOW THAT BOTH OF US ARE TOO BUSY
Well, I don't see why not.
WHEN IS IT?
I HAVE PHOTO SHOOTS ON THE WEEK ENDS, SO IT HAS TO BE ON A WEEKDAY...
NO CAN DO!

I was hoping we could spend some more time together, even if it's just for a little while...
Ahh ...
Depressed
TRY A DIFFERENT POSE THIS TIME.
FLASH
...
HOW SHOULD I LOOK THEN...?
NOTHING LOOKS RIGHT
OK.
THAT'S SO WRONG.
OK.
CHANGE YOUR ANGLE
THAT'S WRONG



Note. Big City = Tokyo

HMM?
AH! SAIKO-CHAN!
YOU SEE, I'M STILL NOT SURE IF GOING TO TOKYO WILL BE GOOD FOR MY CAREER,
BUT I STILL WANT TO GIVE IT A TRY.
YOU GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?
YET AGAIN, HERE'S ANOTHER GIRL WHO THINKS THAT GOING TO TOKYO WILL EARN THEM GREAT FAME.

IS THAT SO?
DON'T YOU THINK IT'D BE BETTER FOR YOU TO JUST CONTINUE YOUR STUDIES INSTEAD?
WELL, GOOD LUCK. DO YOUR BEST TO BE A TOP MODEL, THEN...
SAIKO-CHAN!
SO?
JEEZ!
IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU WANTED HER TO HEAR THOSE WORDS FROM THE VERY BEGINNING!
SHE HAS TO OVERCOME THIS...
...IF SHE REALLY WANTS TO BECOME A TOP MODEL.

NO, I DON'T WANT HIM TO FEEL WORRIED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED...
BEEP
Clear
Menu
Create New Message
Listen, Hajime! The cameramon today was totally scary, and
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
Create New Message
Im going home now
Getting all depressed won't do me any good..
WELCOME BACK.
SWIPE!

WHAT MADE YOU MEET ME ALL OF A SUDDEN?
WRONG
I THOUGHT THAT THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING
SO, SINCE YOUR MESSAGE TODAY WAS REALLY SHORT,
YOU ALWAYS WRITE LONG TEXT MESSAGES,
DON'T BE AFRAID TO TELL ME SOMETHING, SAIKO.
I know that way too well

I ALSO WANT TO GO.
HUH?
I HAVE A DAY OFF FROM CLUB PRACTICE,
SO WE CAN GO RIGHT AFTER I FINISH PRACTICE THE DAY BEFORE THAT.
I WONDER,
SHOULD WE GO ON THAT TRIP AFTER ALL...?
SOMETHING BAD ... REALLY DID HAPPEN,
BUT I GOT OVER IT.
YOU SURE?
No need to worry about me
SAIKO,
HURRY UP OR YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE!
COMING!
23
24
25
TRIP WITH HAJIME
30
31

SAIKO-CHAN, IT'S SOMEONE FROM THE MODELING OFFICE.
RING
RING
I'M GOIN-
OH, I WONDER WHO'S CALLING.
MY, MY, YOUNG DAUGHTERS NOWADAYS COULD ALREADY SPEND THE NIGHT WITH A GUY EVEN IF THEY'RE NOT YET MARRIED...
...
When I was your age
Looks like it would've been better if I had
HOW SNEAKY OF YOU, HAJIME!
WE DON'T HAVE CLUB PRACTICE TOMORROW, RIGHT?
...
WHERE ARE YOU HEADED TO?
JUST THINKING THAT HE'S GOING OUT WITH A MODEL MAKES ME FURIOUS!
WHY THE HECK ARE YOU GUYS FOLLOWING ME?!
HUH? BECAUSE ...
WELL, FOR YOU TO HAVE SUCH A BIG BAG JUST TO CARRY OUR PRACTICE CLOTHES, IT LOOKS REALLY SUSPICIOUS ...
CHATTER
CHATTER
AH!
SENPAI, I DIDN'T TELL THEM ANYTHING!
MAYBE HE'S PLANNING TO LEAVE FOR GOOD ...
These guys.
They're obviously his buddies from the music club.

SAIKO-CHAN REALLY CAME!
NO WAY!
AH!
YOU PERVERT!
SORRY, SAIKO
THESE GUYS DECIDED TO TAG ALONG...
I'M SORRY!
...HUH?
I...
WON'T BE ABLE TO GO ON THE TRIP...
I JUST GOT A CALL FROM THE OFFICE
THEY TOLD ME THAT THE MODEL FOR A SCHEDULED PHOTO SHOOT WON'T BE ABLE TO COME
THEY ASKED ME IF I HAD ANY OTHER THINGS PLANNED.
SO THEY THOUGHT THAT I CAN PERHAPS TAKE HER PLACE TOMORROW.
I TOLD THEM THAT I'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE IT.

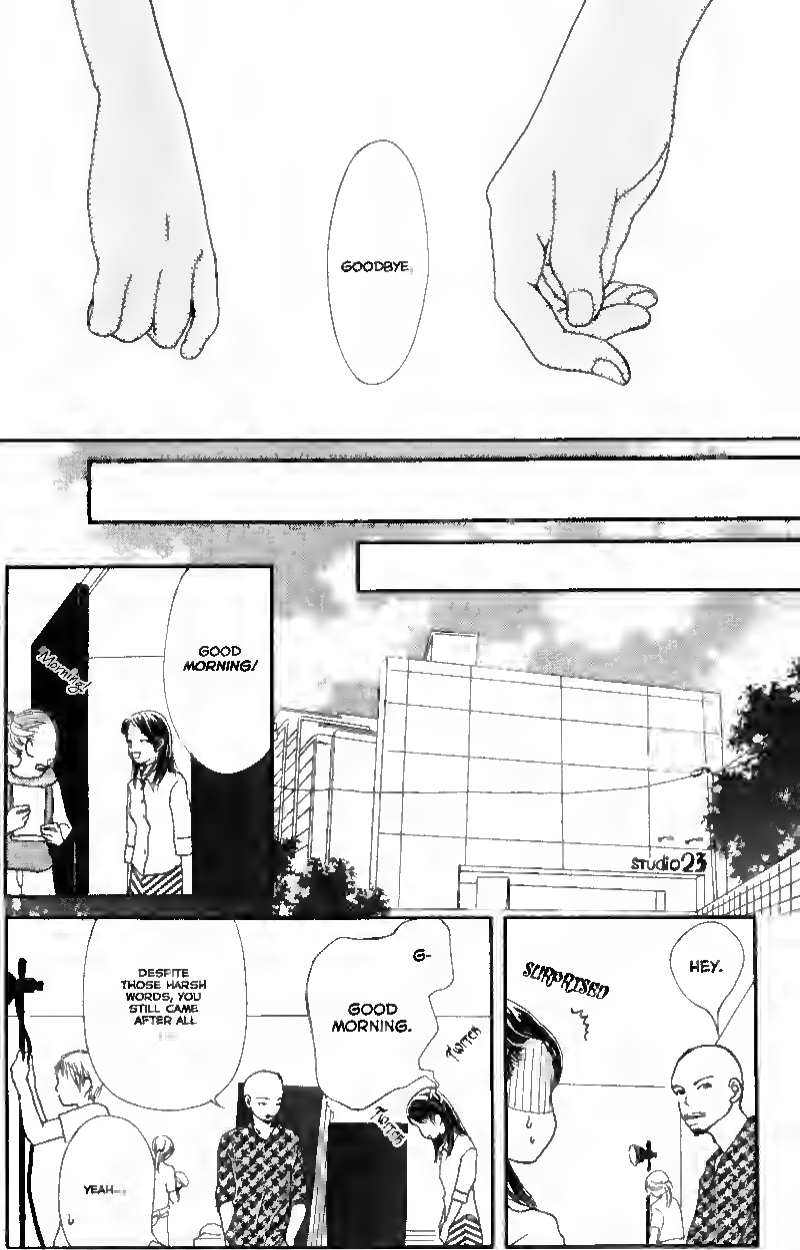
OH, YEAH!
I'LL PAY FOR THE FEE TO CANCEL THE HOTEL RESERVATION
IT'S ALL RIGHT
...
THIS IS YET ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY FOR ME.
SO I DIDN'T WANT TO JUST LET IT PASS.
HAJIME...
BEFORE, YOU DECIDED TO GO TO TOKYO AND LEAVE SENPAI BEHIND, AND NOW THIS?!
HEY! AREN'T YOU GOING TOO FAR ALREADY?!
DO YOU VALUE YOUR CAREER THAT MUCH? MORE THAN HAJIME-SENPAI?!
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO TELL YOU HOW SELFISH YOU ARE! YOU NEVER THINK OF ANYONE BUT YOURSELF!

YEAH.
YOU'RE REALLY THE WORST!
Heh.
AH!
SENPAI!
I really am the worst ...
if I can hurt his feelings like this ...

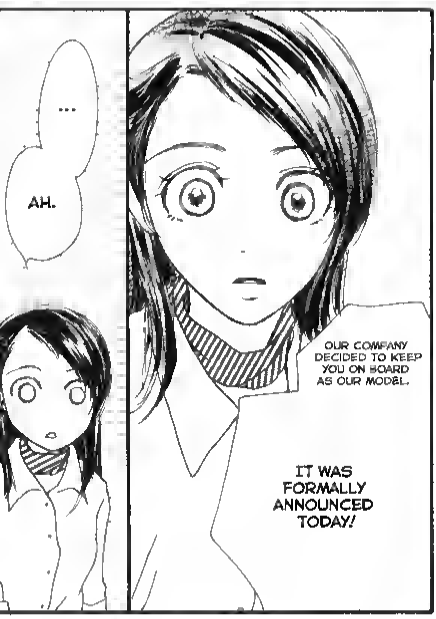
Even then, I still believed that my career was more important.
CLACK
IS IT REALLY OK FOR ME TO NOT SEE YOU OFF?
I ALREADY TOLD YOU THAT I'M GONNA BE FINE.
AND BESIDES, IT'S NOT LIKE I'M GONNA BE AWAY FOR A LONG TIME.
Neither'll gonna be lonely...
TAKE GOOD CARE, OK?

YOU SEE...
DON'T APOLOGIZE
YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG.
UM.

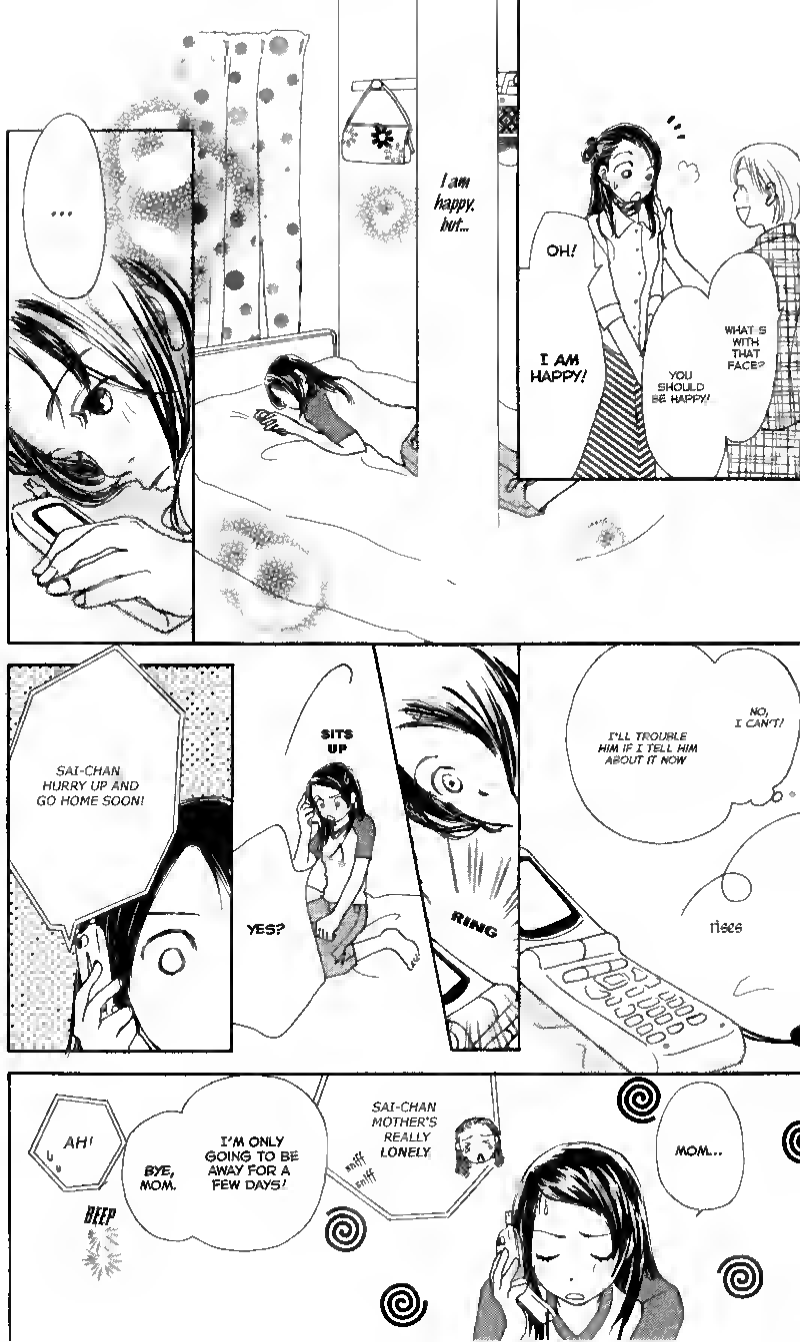
I'LL DO THE SAME
CALL ME IF ANYTHING HAPPENS, OK?
I KNOW
I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO LET THIS OPPORTUNITY PASS
SWING
PLEASE,
DO YOUR BEST.


GOODBYE.
Studio23
Morning!
GOOD MORNING!
DESPITE THOSE HARSH WORDS, YOU STILL CAME AFTER ALL.
YEAH...
G-
GOOD MORNING.
TOUCH
TOUCH
SURPRISED
HEY.

YEAH. YOU SEE, THAT GUY HAS A HABIT OF TEASING THE ONES HE LIKES.
It's not teasing.
It's bullying.
Really?
I SEE...
FAVORITE?!
THAT HE'LL BE ABLE TO WORK WITH HIS FAVORITE SAIKO-CHAN AGAIN.
Tee hee!
ACTUALLY, HE'S JUST HAPPY
GLOOM
...
IF YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LIVE UP TO MY EXPECTATIONS.
GRIN
WELL, LET'S SEE...


...
AH.
OUR COMPANY DECIDED TO KEEP YOU ON BOARD AS OUR MODEL.
IT WAS FORMALLY ANNOUNCED TODAY!

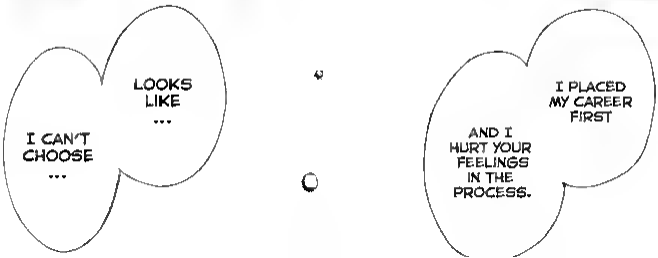
HE TOLD ME BEFORE THAT WE MIGHT WORK TOGETHER AGAIN...
?
EVEN THOUGH MY CONTRACT FOR NO.1 GIRL IS ALREADY OVER...
SAIKO-CHAN!
M-Manager?
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GONNA BE WORKING TOGETHER AGAIN!


...
I am happy, but...
OH!
I AM HAPPY!
YOU SHOULD BE HAPPY!
WHAT'S WITH THAT FACE?
SAI-CHAN HURRY UP AND GO HOME SOON!
SITS UP
YES?
RING
I'LL TROUBLE HIM IF I TELL HIM ABOUT IT NOW
NO, I CAN'T!
niece
AH!
BEEP
BYE, MOM.
I'M ONLY GOING TO BE AWAY FOR A FEW DAYS!
SAI-CHAN MOTHER'S REALLY LONELY
MOM...

SAIKO?
JEEZ!
MOM, DIDN'T I TELL YOU—
RING RING
...
Jeez.
I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU THAT WE WON IN THE BRASS BAND COMPETITION
HUH?
WERE YOU TALKING TO YOUR MOM JUST NOW?
AH
NO, IT'S NOT LIKE THAT
IT'S NOT REALLY THAT BIG OF A DEAL, BUT...
UM, YEAH...
IT'S HAJIME...
CONGRATULATIONS!
REALLY?! WOW! THAT'S GREAT!!
YEAH

I KNOW I SHOULD BE REALLY DELIGHTED ABOUT IT ...
REALLY?
OH! SOMETHING GOOD HAPPENED TO ME TODAY, TOO!
WHAT ABOUT YOU, SAIKO?
SAIKO?
I SHOULD BE HAPPY ABOUT IT, BUT FOR SOME REASON, I'M NOT...
BUT, I FEEL STRANGE ABOUT IT... I WONDER WHY...

I REALLY THOUGHT I MADE THE RIGHT DECISION
TO PURSUE MY CAREER
BUT, IT DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT
I'M NOT HAPPY AT ALL
WITHOUT YOU BY MY SIDE,
I DON'T FEEL HAPPY AT ALL ...


I PLACED MY CAREER FIRST
AND I HURT YOUR FEELINGS IN THE PROCESS.
LOOKS LIKE ...
I CAN'T CHOOSE ...

...WHAT SHOULD I DO...?
IF YOU CAN'T DECIDE WHICH ONE TO CHOOSE,
PERHAPS IT'S ALL RIGHT TO NOT CHOOSE AT ALL.

Hajime
...
SAIKO.
IS HE REALLY GONNA COME?
I'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE IT IN TIME FOR THE LAST TRAIN! THIS WILL MAKE UP FOR THE TRIP WE WEREN'T ABLE TO GO ON RECENTLY!
HUH? RIGHT NOW?
SORRY ABOUT THAT

Becoming the no. 1 model is a great thing.

but right now, more so than love or work.

what I want is to be...

his no. 1 girl.

<No 1 Girl> * End * Originally published in Betsuma Shocomi September 2001 issue

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presents

Carmel Milk Tea

story 4

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